

Sri Venkatachala - Its Glory

G. V. Chalapati Rao



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Preface

“Mythology”, said Sri Rajaji “is an integral part of religion. It is as necessary for religion and national culture as the skin and skeleton that preserve a fruit with its juice and taste. “Mythology and holy figures are necessary for any great culture to rest on its stable spiritual foundation and function as a life giving inspiration and guide”

The Hindu Puranas contain the body of Hindu mythology and describe the tales of the past.

Neither the Seven holy Hills of Tirupati nor their Lord enshrined in the basin formed of the peaks of the hills require any introduction. Sri Venkateswara is the Almighty most sought after in this Kali age.

Scientists have established that the natural arch located in one of these hills has very few parallels in the world. The arch is said to be an embodiment of the erosions the receding sea could bring on the newly formed rocks on the seven and nearby hills. The rock types on these hills, scientists say, are granites, and shales (fine grained rocks) quartzites. The age of the granite is assessed by the scientists as 2100 million years. About 1600 million years ago seismic changes, it is said, occurred resulting on the surface of the earth the disappearance of seas and upsprings of mountains, hills and dees. Thus science has also proved the age long existence of the seven hills of Venkatachala.

About two years ago I happened to see a few soled books kept in an insignificant corner in the book stall of Messrs Higginbothams on the platform at Vijayawada Railway Station.

When I tried, out of curiosity, to pick them up the salesman dissuaded me pointing out that they were some old books of Tirupati. My inquisitiveness increased and I requested the salesman to permit me to see them. He allowed me to go through the books and handed over two volumes to me. They were of "Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam" containing Sanskrit text in Telugu script, published in 1959 and 1961 by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams. I purchased the two books, much to the amusement of the salesman.

As I went through them I felt a keen desire to render them into English. I translated my desire into action and it took about a year to complete the work. Despite my limited knowledge of Sanskrit I ventured to present the glory of Sri Venkatachala with divine inspiration and human effort. I might have erred in many ways in my endeavour. For all my lapses I repeat the prayer by sage Markandeya and implore Sri Venkateswara to forgive me. "Agnanina maya doshan asesha vihitam Hare, kshamastatwam, kshamastatwam, Seshasaila Sikhamane".

I am very much grateful to the authorities of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams for their assistance and also I am much obliged to the Government of India for having made available printing paper for printing this book at concessional rate.

14-4-1983

G. V. Chalapati Rao

INVOCATION

I pay obeisance to the Supreme Being, The Lord of LAKSHMI, abode of the happy, storehouse of the suppliant.

I pay reverence to Lord Sreenivasa, who dwells on Sri Venkatachala.

I salute with folded hands Lord Sri Venkateswara, the wish yielding coral tree of the suppliant.

I humbly bow before Lord SRI BHOO VARAHA who saved the Earth from the nethermost region and made her available for all beings to dwell upon.

I express my profound veneration to Lord YAGNA VARAHA, SRI KRISHNA, the Lord with multiple arms.

I offer my ardent adoration to the Omnifarious Almighty, the embodiment of VEDAS and VEDANTA.

1. Sages approach SOOTHA

Once upon a time some sages approached Sootha, the eminent expounder of puranas and entreated him thus :-

“Sootha, compassionate sage, You are omniscient. You are learned in every Dharma. Be pleased to enlighten us on some important topics.

Which is the holiest of all the sacred spots of sanctity where the Almighty Lord, Sri Vishnu manifested himself and which is liked by him most ?

Which is the locality where superhuman faculties could be achieved and around which the marvellous story of Lord Sri Vishnu revolves ?

Which is the place where the Almighty Sri Hari dwells visible to all human beings ?

Kindly reveal to us the name and the details of such a sacred, wonderful and charming Vishnava holy place by knowing which there remains nothing else to be known.

Sootha went into contemplation for a while and then observed :

“How nice of you to have put these virtuous and deserving questions ! In fact, I have a great desire to enlighten you on these. I shall gladly narrate to you what you all desire to know. Indeed, your queries relate to the legend dealing with Swethavaraha kalpa and Sree Seshachala”.

So saying, Sootha began his narration thus :-

Lord Sri Varaha Incarnates

Long long ago, Demons grew very strong and powerful. They moved freely every where and did whatever they wanted. They were arrogant in their thoughts and cruel in their deeds. Finding their atrocities intolerable, Gowthama and some other

sages pronounced a curse on them that they would be born on Earth. Consequently, the Demons took their birth on Earth. Nevertheless, they began to harass the entire world.

Unable to bear their cruelty, the Earth sank to the lowest of the informal regions. Sri Hari, the Almighty, saviour of the depressed desired to rescue her. He assumed the shape of a gigantic white boar Swethavaraha. He entered Patala, the nethermost region of the Universe which was under waters. He searched for the Earth. A fierce battle took place between him and the Demon leader, Hiranyaksha. Both wrestled for long. The Lord grew wild. He breathed fire. He blew the demon up with his tusks to a great height. The demon perished. Waters of the Sea were filled with his blood.

The sages residing in Janaloka were amazed on seeing the red waters. They wanted to know why, such a huge quantity of blood flew in the waters. They meditated on the Almighty and could understand the magnitude of the Prowess of the wonderful and mightiest white boar. They sang the praise of Swethavaraha.

Swethavaraha then lifted up the earth to the surface of the waters with his lustrous tusks. He set his feet on the hood of Sesha the celestial serpent and stood in Janaloka. Brahma, other gods and Sages eulogised him. There was a shower of flowers. Celestial nymphs danced to the accompaniment of Heavenly music. The Gods extolled Swetha Varaha thus :

Hail to you - O Great bear :

Hail to you - O Saviour of Earth :

Hail to you - O Achyutha, Destroyer of Hiranyaksha.

You have neither beginning nor end. At the time of creation, you assume the role of Creator and become the four Armed Brahma and create the Universe.

As Vishnu, the protector of the Universe, you maintain and rule over it.

As Destroyer, the eminent, at the end of a kalpa, you annihilate everything.

You are the Omnipresent. Lord, you are the creator of everything. Even Gods cannot understand your summed up form. O Supreme Being, Bhagavan Vishnu have mercy. Be pleased to re-establish the earth as before so that all creatures may live on it.

Swetha Varaha, pleased with the prayer, re-established the earth in her original place. Directed by him, the eight elephants of the eight corners of the Universe, the King of serpents, and the Tortoise bore the Earth.

Dharani, the goddess earth approached the Lord. Lord Varaha, clasped her to his bosom and said :

"Oh ! Good Goddess' Vasudha, blessed are you ! Install all creatures in their respective positions". Goddess Dharani was slightly abashed. She stared at her Lord and represented : "Bhagavan, Lord of Lords, Ocean of compassion, Destroyer of Demons, I was down at the bottom of the deep ocean. You saved me from this catastrophe, O thousand headed Lord, I salute you with folded hands again and again". So praying, Bhoodevi trembled. The Lord consoled her and said : "Listen Vasudha my dear, you are true to your name. What you have said is correct". He gave her suitable advice. On account of her patience and forbearance in bearing her own weight, goddess Earth acquired supreme reverence.

Ever since Lord Varaha had been dwelling in an ant hill on the western bank of Swami Pushkarini on Venkatachala, moving about on the Earth and returning to his abode.

While Gods and celestial beings offer Worship to Lord Swetha Varaha who holds the Conch and discus and is adorned with lustrous and auspicious Ornaments the Lord had been blessing his devotees and granting them boons.

2. ANANTHA becomes a Mountain

One day Lord Srihari called SETHA and said to him "Anantha, dear, there is no one equal to you anywhere. I shall therefore entrust to you some small work. I would like to dwell on the Earth at a place suitable for my sporting. You better go to Earth and stay as a Mountain there. I shall come there with Lakshmi to stay".

SETHA obeyed the order. Before proceeding, he submitted :

"I am Anantha, O-God of Gods. I shall assume the Body of a hill according to your directions. Rivers such as the Ganges, sacred places and lakes shall dwell on me as per your order. Let everything take place as ordered by you". Srihari then said : "Lord of Serpents, Anantha, I shall grant your desires. Mendicants shall perform penance on you without any hindrance. Visible to every creature, I shall dwell on the Hill fulfilling the wishes of all". He instructed his consort Goddess Sri who was by his side and Goddesses BHU and NEELA suitably as proposed by the great Sage Narada sometime ago.

The Lord directed his generalissimo also to proceed with the retinue and army to the selected place. He told him "You proceed at once with Yakshas, Siddhas, Vidyadharas, Kinneras, Uragas and Rishis to Seshachala. Tell them all about my decisions to reside on that hill with Goddess Lakshmi to bless Sadhus and my votaries".

Sage Vyaghrapada

Soon after his arrival on earth SETHA became a mountain with His head at KALAHASTHI, a sacred place of SIVA. North of his tail was located the sacred SRI SAILA where there was the hermitage of Lord NEELAKANTHA.

Long long ago, a sage named, Vyagharapada, performed penance for long to have a vision of Lord Sambhu. Pleased with his Tapas, Neelakantha arrived on his speedy vehicle and manifested himself before the sage.....along with his consort GIRI and other retinue, Siddhas, Yakshas and serpents. Sage Vyaghrapada prostrated himself before the Lord and sang his praise thus :

"O Bhagavan, most compassionate Lord, the cause of the Universe, you have been graciously pleased to come down to Earth. I salute you". The sage then remained silent. Lord Neelakantha smiled. He called the sage near him and said :

"I am pleased with your penance. I am here to grant whatever you desire".

Vyaghrapada requested Lord Sambhu to stay at the place where he manifested himself. "Let the lake nearby be called after you, O Lord. Let those who bathe in this lake have their wishes accomplished" the sage prayed. Lord Neelakantha agreed. He stayed there with his consort.

3. KREEDACHELA BROUGHT FROM VYKUNTHA

Lord Swethavaraha, the mighty white boar got divided the Ocean into seven seas and the world into seven divisions as before. He sent for BRAHMA. "Create the Universe as in the previous form" he said to him. Brahma created the Sun and the moon first as directed by Swethavaraha.

The Lord then thought of a suitable place to keep the earth in the interest of the Universe. He called Garuda, his eagle vehicle and said :

"Look here, O mighty VYNATHEYA, go at once to my supreme abode and bring here my sporting hill Kreedachala quickly. Bring all my attendants, servants, Vishvakshena and others also".

Garuda proceeded immediately, as directed. Lord Swethavaraha occupied the Earth with his feet. He then arrived on the banks of River Gomathi. He then went 60 yojanas south and then west of the eastern sea. The area was north of the river Rukmi. It was then inhabited by Holy Human beings ready.

There the Lord was waiting for the arrival of GARUDA. After reaching the Supreme abode of the Lord—GARUDA saw wonderful, charming, golden hill full of gems. Its summit was high. It was composed of the five Upanishads. Every where there were lovely trees, beautiful birds and attractive flowers and animals. The rivers were full of crystal clear water. The place was frequently visited by celestial beings

Kreedachela was about 30 yojanas long and three yojanas wide (one yojana equals to 8 or 9 miles.)

It looked like SESHU, the serpent bed of Lord Hari. It was the dwelling place of many holy beings and was capable of

conferring merit and salvation. Along with the sacred lake, Swamipushkarini, Garuda transported the hill on his broad and powerful shoulders. He flew with utmost speed and reached the Lord with all his retinue. The winds which blew with great velocity on account of the speed, uprooted many trees on the earth. The Lord instructed Garuda to land the Hill. He himself ascended it from the western side in a sacred forest on the banks of the Holy Swamypushkarini. He took his seat with his Sankha, Chakra and Gada in the Vimana which was profusely decorated and was studded with several towers. It was dazzling like a million Suns and was elegant beyond description.

All Gods, Gandharvas, Brahma, sages, SANAKARA Parvathi, Rishis, Vasus, and Rudras arrived there and sang the Lord's praise thus :

"Victory, to you, O Lord of Lakshmi, Hail to you, Lord Vishnu, Achuta, saviour of Earth, destroyer of Demon Hiranyaksha. Your terrific tusks and fierce form are wild and violent to look at. Looking at the blazing weapons on your shoulders every one is afraid. You are on the Earth out of your compassion. Your appearance is awful. You rescued the Earth from the catastrophe and provided habitation to Gods and Human beings also. We entreat you to stay on here in a pleasing form which we can tolerate."

The Lord agreed. He assumed a mild form with four hands, lotus eyes, and a full moon face. His consorts, Sri Devi and Bhodevi were on either of his side. His body was adorned with all kinds of precious jewellery.

The Lord then assembled all the Gods and said :

"This Holy Hill - VENKATA is more agreeable to me. I propose to dwell here with my consorts to fulfill the ambitions of all human beings and Gods."

Every one who assembled there returned to their respective abodes taking leave of the Lord.

4. The glory of Sree Varaha

Sri Varaha continues to dwell on Sri Venkatachala with his two consorts till the end of the present Kalpa, granting his vision to the meritorious. The Kalpa in which he assumed the role of Swethavaraha and recovered the earth from the morass of the nethermost region down the Ocean is named Swethavaraha Kalpa. As and when the unrighteous take an upper hand and gain supremacy over the righteous, and the righteous are tortured, He manifests himself as a Man or God, assuming any Form. He then makes short work of the wicked and unrighteous. He protects the virtuous by restoring righteousness and Vedic knowledge. He stays somewhere. But he witnesses everything. He wanders for pleasure on Seshachala accompanied by Lakshmi. The ever liberated Gods and those who take up any form they wish accompany Him. VENKATACHALA is more beloved to him than Vykuntha.

Kreedadri, the sporting hill of the Lord

All longings of every one would be accomplished on the Holy Venkatachala. None would face any obstacles in achieving their desires. Mantras, Yagnas and penances would have their harvest speedily, if undertaken on Venkatachala. By a trifling penance on the Holy Hill, one could have his ambitions achieved.

All teerthas and merits reside on the holy Hill always. Whoever offers worship to them daily with faith and devotion would have his desires accomplished. Anyone in pursuit of knowledge achieves it. One who desires wealth would acquire it. An issueless person who desires progeny would be blessed with a son. A physically handicapped person attains a charming body, cattle and grain. In short, whatever one's ambition is it is achieved on the sacred Hill. Venkatachala is a venerable and wonderous wishyielding tree.

Some years lapsed after Sri Varaha had taken up residence on earth. Ant hills grew on the abode of the Lord. The Lord was not noticed by anyone for some time.

5. Lord varaha consecrated

Doorvasa the sage renowned for his ruthless anger, happened to witness one day a Kinnera couple engaged in love in public. The sage in his natural haste grew wild. "You will be born as hunter couple, and live in a forest." He pronounced a curse on the couple. The Kinneras were afraid. They entreated the sage to show mercy on them. They requested him to show a way out also. The sage took pity and said, "you will be redeemed of my curse when a white boar roams on the banks of Swamy Pushkarini."

The Kinnera couple were born as a hunter and his wife. They lived in the dense forest on the Simhachala. In course of time they had a son. They named him Chitrangada. Once, while wandering in the forest, the hunter saw a field with dry crops. He collected a few grains from it and handed them over to his wife. To keep a watch over the grain he deputed his son. Lateron, he raised an elevated shed and seated himself on it to watch the crop.

One day Swethavaraha came out of the ant-hill in search of food. He entered the field and went deep into it. The hunter saw the boar and his movements. The boar noticed the hunter and entered the ant-hill.

The hunter reported the incident to the ruler of the land. The king was amazed and proceeded to the scene, in the guise of a hunter. First he went to Swamy Pushkarini. He had a dip in it and prostrated himself before it. He returned to the field, took his bow and arrows and kept a watch for the boar. After a while the boar came and ran across the field in search of food. The king was astonished. He fitted an arrow to the bow and hit in the direction of the boar. Sri Varaha withdrew into the ant-hill hastily. The king approached the ant-hill and lay down on a grass bed. But he could not see the boar. He had a holy dip in the Pushkarini again. Clad in the robes of a hermit he began meditating on Lord Varaha, minding neither the heat in the summer

nor the cold in the winter. He continued his meditation. Rains also had no effect on him. The hunter looked after the king during that period. After sometime a heavenly voice was heard by the king thus : "If you desire to see Varaha, follow what I say. Flood the ant-hill with cow milk. Varaha will be drenched and then will come out of the hill."

The king was taken aback. He stayed at a place about two yojanas east of the hill. He made all arrangements necessary for the installation of a Deity. He bathed the ant-hill with cow milk. He poured milk through the mouth of the ant-hill in a continuous flow. After sometime Lord Varaha manifested himself with all splendour and brilliance before the king. He had four hands and was holding the conch in one hand and the discus in the other. He had his consort Bhudevi seated on his left lap. He had his body adorned with precious gems and beautiful ornaments. When the lovely Lord burst out of the hill the king could not contain himself. The flow of the milk was interrupted by a heavenly voice thus :-

"Raja, stop at once. You will see me upto this height only. You will not see my legs." The king felt very sad with a broken heart. He wanted to stay there until he had a vision of the Lord. Lord Varaha pitied the king. "O king, enough with your torments. Consecrate a pure idol of mine in a shrine here. You will be blessed with all prosperity. Arrange, worship to me by Vyghanasa Maharshis. After sometime you will have a vision of mine. Go now to your capital and rule over your kingdom." So saying Lord Varaha retreated.

No sooner than the Kinneras as hunters saw the Lord they were rid of the curse pronounced on them by Doorvasa. They returned to their permanent abode. The king consecrated Lord Varaha in a shrine near Swamy Pushkarini. Paying reverence to the Lord he prostrated himself before Him and offered worship. Restraining his senses he returned to his capital. From then onwards Sreevaraha had taken up his residence on Ses'hachala with his legs hid in the ant-hill. Goddess Bhoodevi stays with him in the

6. Brahma and others visit Ksheerasagara

Once the Devas including Brahma were put to great distress by demons who were devotees of Rudra. Unable to bear the tortures, they had no alternative except seeking refuge of the Almighty Sreemahavishnu. They rushed to the ocean of milk and sang thus the praise of the Lord—who was lying on his serpent bed.

“Om, salutations, Lord of Gods, the primeval God Almighty, Supreme being, we pay obeisance to you with folded hands. O Omniscient Lord, we pay reverence to you. Creator of the Universe, Lord Lakshminarayana, Janardana, Lord of SREE, Sree Mahavishnu, the cause of everything. O Lotus eyed Narayana, Lord of the universe, the ever blissful, the one without a second, the one who has no decay or growth, the ever existing, the one without a body or form, Achyutha, Anantha, Govinda.

We salute you with folded hands. O Almighty, Ocean of compassion, Lord with limitless prowess, Purushottama, We pay obeisance to you, Lotus eyed beautiful Lord. Extend your grace on us. O Lord of Kamala, saviour of votaries, merciful Lord, save us, save us. Come to our rescue, Lord.”

Then a lotus eyed, lotus faced attendant of Goddess Lakshmi came out of the ocean. She extended a hearty welcome to the visitors.

“What for have you all come here?” she enquired them. “Once again any trouble from the demons?” she questioned. “Be no afraid Sirs, Lord Srinivasa, the Merciful Almighty will be soon manifesting Himself before you. He will be relieving you of all your difficulties Sreehari is now on Narayana Giri near Swami Pushakarini with Lakshmi. All of you approach him, the Almighty

with thousand heads, thousand eyes and thousand feet. Success will be yours surely." she assured.

Brahma and his party left to the oarth. Brahma headed the party. They reached Narayanadri, the sacred. They went to the Holy Swamy Pushkarini. They witnessed birds singing melodiously, and trees flowering charmingly. Everything there was pleasing to the eye and refreshing to the ear. They rested there for a while. They stood up and offered prayers to the Almighty thus : "Hail to you, O lotus eyed, obeisance to you, Creator of the Universe. Reverence to you, Hrishikesa, Mahapurusha. Obeisance to you, Lord dwelling in the realm of Lakshmi, Lord Narayana, protector of the oppressed. Creator, preserver, omnipresent, saviour of the Universe....obeisance to you."

While every one stood offering prayers, a beautiful Vimana manifested itself on the western shore of Swami Pushkarini. There was heard a blare of musical instruments slowly. Celestial music and beating of kettle drums were heard. There was a down-pour of flowers from the Heavens. Every one saw Lord Srinivasa and the vimana. They praised the Lord thus : "Victory to you, Vishnu, the everlasting Lord, Achyutha, Hail to you, Anirudha. Hail to you, Bhagavan, hail to you, Lord of Lords."

Sreehari was pleased. Shining like one-thousand suns with effluence of one thousand moons and radiance of one thousand fires, he manifested himself. He had a diadem glittering like the midday sun. The celestial, precious ornament Srivatsa Kausthubha, and a diamond necklace adorned his chest. He wore very lustrous earrings, gem-set and brilliant rings, and a pearl set belt. Clad in a yellow silk cloth his body was full of precious ornaments. He was beauty personified. His eyes were like lotuses. His body was anointed with scented oils, ointments, and perfumes. His face looked like a full moon. With a smiling look he enquired the visitors extending a hearty welcome to them. "You have all come down here. May I know the purpose of the visit.? Perhaps, you were troubled by some enemies." He asked them. "Merciful Lord, we are in great perils. We are surrendering to you for protection. Why talk of our welfare?" they replied. "Indra and other Rulers have been dethroned. Afraid of their own safety they are unable to

He asked her whether any special purpose brought her there. The Goddess said : “O Lord, you have saved me from Pathala, the lowest region of the Universe. You have placed me on the head of Anantha. Kindly enlighten me on one subject. Which is the mountain, the best support of mine?” Sreevaraha listed out the important mountains on the Earth thus: “SUMERU, HIMAVAN, VINDHYA, MANDARA, GANDHAMADANA SALAGRAMA, CHITRAKOOTA, MALAYVAN, PARIYATRIK, MAHENDRA, MALAYA, SALYA, SIMHADRI, RYVATHA, ANJANA,— all these are your supports, O Vasumdhara. They are respected by me, all gods and Rishis.

SALAGRAMA, SIMHADRI, AND GANDHAMADANA lie south of Himalayas. ARUNADRI, HASTISAILA, GHRUDRADRI, GHATIKACHELA are located near the milky river. Five Yojanas north to Hasthisaila flows the Holy Suvarnamukhi. To its north, is situated Padma Sarovara. On its banks manifested himself Lord Hari, the saviour of sage Suka. He is accompanied by Balabhadra and worshipped by sages and Vyghanasas daily. North of the Kamalasarovara in the dense forests about two crores lies the sacred hill Venkatachala, the abode of Vasudeva. On this golden hill reside Gods like Indra, sages such as Vasishta, Siddhas, Sadhyas, Maruts, Danavas, Daityas, Rambha and other Apsaras, Nagas, Garudas, and Kinneras, There are many sacred lakes there. Some of them are Chakra, Divya, Viadganga, Kumaradhara, Papanasana, Pandava and Swamy Pushkarini on the Narayanadri. South of Swamy Pushkarini, I am staying with you. On the southern bank of Pushkarini, the Almighty Srinivasa stays. Swamy pushkarini, equals the Ganges and every other sacred river in regard to the merit each can confer. It is the master of all teerthas in all the three worlds. All other teerthas offer worship to it. There are millions of other teerthas also there. However, six of them are most prominent. Tumbuteertha equals the birth place of Ganga. Papanasana, purifies those who bathe in it on Sunday, when the the moon is in conjunction with the star Hastha.

To the north-west of my shrine, in a cave, is a beautiful lake called Devateertha. One who has a holy dip in this on thursday in the month of Pushya and on monday in the month of Sravana, or on any day of Vyateepata, a portent foreboding a great calamity, gets cleared of all sins. His merit multiplies itself. He acquires prosperity and longevity and finally lands in heaven and settles down in Chandraloka. Anyone, who feeds the hungry poor on that day becomes life long donor. Goddess Dharani was pleased to listen to the Lord. She sang his praise thus : 'Reverence to you, Lord of Lords, boar faced Achyutha, mighty and charming Lord. You saved me from the bottom of the lowest regions of the Ocean in the beginning of the Kalpa. I am bearing the weight of the worlds. O Lord, clad in goldenhued attire, adorned with precious gems, having lustrous lotus like feet, salutations to you. Lord with golden and lustrous earrings, and brightest jewels, you are the Supreme Soul worshipped by Brahma and Siva. O wide eyed, you are the embodiment of all knowledge transcending sound. Prostrations to you, lovely Lord, Ananth, bliss personified, controller of Yama, salutations to you.' So singing, Dharani prostrated herself before the Lord. Lord Varaha lifted up Goddess Dharani. He smelt her forehead and pressed her to his bosom. He seated her by his right side. He then mounted Garuda and flew to Vrishabhachala while Narada and other sages sang His praise.

8. The Trinity tested

Once upon a time Kashyapa and some other sages performed a great Yaga on the banks of the sacred River Ganges. Narada attended the Yaga and questioned those in charge of it : "What for is this Yaga ? Who is the recipient of its fruit?"

The sages could not answer. They deputed Bhrigu the learned Maharshi to go and test the Gods personally and report his conclusions. Bhrigu went to Brahma first. The rulers of the eight corners were there. Recitation of Vedas was echoing. Saraswathi was serving her Lord Brahma. Bhrigu prostrated himself before the four headed Lord Brahma. Brahma remained silent.

"This is an ignorant one!" The Maharshi thought and immediately left for Kailasa.

The three-eyed Lord Siva was in his private chamber with Parvathi, his consort. He did not notice the visitor at all. The divine lady, however, noticed the intruder and felt ashamed. "Leave me, my Lord. A sage has come!" she pointed out. Siva released her from his embrace and tried to kill Bhrigu for his unauthorised intrusion at that moment of amour. The sage grew wild and cursed Siva thus "You will not be worshipped in the world. You will acquire fame by your sex-symbol, which alone will be worshipped."

Bhrigu then straight-away went to Vykuntha and visited Sreehari. The Lord was in his bed chambers, relaxing on serpent couch. Lakshmi was also there. Bhrigu approached Sreehari and gave a kick on his chest. The Lord got up hurriedly and fell on the feet of the sage, took him within his arms and asked him courteously : "O Great sage, why have you kicked my body which neither gods nor men can attack? It is eight times harder

than a diamond. But your feet are so tender. By contacting my rough body what an amount of pain your feet have suffered!" So saying, he laved the feet of the sage with hot water and sprinkled that water on his head and observed : "Sage, by your Darshan all the worlds get purified."

Bhrigu returned to the assembly of sages and announced his verdict :'' Hari is the Supreme God. After him comes Lakshmi. Next come Brahma and Saraswathi''. Gods have their ranking just like Suras, Asuras and Men. Sreehari has been allotted the first rank. So, the Yagna was dedicated to that Supreme Being.

9. The Lord's Manifestations

Soon after Bhṛigu left, Sree Viṣṇu and his consort were alone. "I am leaving you and going, O Lord of Lords," declared Lakṣmi. "The sage has kicked your body embraced by me. I am going away." Thus proclaiming Lakṣmi bade good-bye to the Lord and reached Pathala, where Sage Kapila worshipped her. She stayed there for some time, and then left for Karaveerapura.

Sreehari also left Vykuṇṭha and came to Sri Venkatagiri near River Suvarṇamukhi at the tail-end of Sreṣṣaila. On the hill lies sacred Swami Pushkarini. Fortunate are those who have a holy dip in it as it is the birth place of all tēerthas. Funeral rites or ceremonies performed in honour of the dead relatives performed near the holy lake ensure promotion of the manes to higher worlds.

Sri Rama could recover Sita after he had a holy dip in the sacred waters of Swami Pushkarini. Lord Sreenivasa considered Venkatachala as greater than Vykuṇṭha. He went in search of a suitable place on it for his stay. He saw an ant-hill beneath a tamarind tree south of Swami Pushkarini and entered it. Several years passed. The era of Kali entered.

The country was then ruled by an ideal Chola king, Everything was available in plenty. On account of timely and adequate rains lands yielded the maximum. Women were devoted to their husbands. Husbands were devoted to their wives. All were happy.

In order to assist Sri Hari, Brahma, the Creator assumed the role of cow. Rudra became the calf. Lakṣmi transformed herself as the wife of the cow-boy. They all descended to the earth. The cow and calf were sold to the king by their master. The king allotted them to a servant. The cow's milk was to feed the king's son. The cow used to go to Venkatachala daily,



Sri Venkatachala-Its Glory

along with a tiger and other crows. She used to approach the ant-hill in which the Lord was dwelling and release her milk in the mouth of the ant-hill. The milk was consumed by the inmate of the ant-hill. One day, there was no milk for the prince. The queen questioned the cow boy: "What are you doing with the milk? Consuming it yourself? Or are you allowing the calf to consume to the lost drop?" The boy was afraid. "I do not know, madam, what is happening to the milk" he replied. The queen got wild and sentenced that the boy be given some beatings. The next day the cow-boy wanted to investigate personally the activities of the cow. He tied a rope to the animal and remained in hiding, watching. The cow was slowly releasing her milk into the ant-hill. The boy could understand everything. He beat the cow with his axe. The Lord rushed out from the ant-hill considering it his duty to save the cow. By his sympathetic intervention he had himself to suffer. The axe fell on his head causing an injury. Blood gushed out of the wound. The cow boy was shocked. He died on the spot. The cow went to the king weeping like a mother who lost her child. She fell on the ground rolling. The king sent his men to find out the cause. The men enquired and informed him about the tragedy. Meanwhile the cow, cow boy and his wife disappeared. The king rushed to the spot on a palanquin. He met the Lord and enquired. The Lord accused the king and alleged: "You are a sinner; you are arrogant. you think too much of your self and your king-dom. I am an orphan and poor. There is none to help me. My wife and relatives have deserted me. A cow boy beat me. I am unable to bear the agony. An unwise head of family is responsible for the sins committed by the members of his family." He cursed the king to become a devil. The king fell at once on the ground, recovered and got up after a while. "I am innocent, My Lord, Why did you curse me, without establishing my guilt?"

What is my fault? "he questioned the Lord. The Lord replied that he cursed an innocent man in haste. "My curse will not go in-vain any way. I am very sorry for all that happened on account of my love towards my votaries. You will suffer till the Kaliyuga only. You will be born as Akasa Raja and offer your daughter, Padmavathi to me. You will present to me a

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gem-set crown also then. I will wear it every Friday evening. You will be happy" he said. He indicated the time and purpose of his incarnation.

The Lord then thought about Guru, the celestial physician. Guru arrived and gave the prescription for the treatment of the Lord's wound. "Milk of Udumbara tree, cotton-seeds and rind of sun-plant are the ingredients from which the medicine has to be prepared and applied to the wound. The Lord underwent the treatment and re-entered his abode, which he treated as his mothers, Kausalya or Devaki. The tamarind tree was his father, Vasudeva, for him. Seshachala was Balabhadra. The surface of the hill was Ayodhya or Madhura for him. The Pushkarini was River Yamuna. The animals and the birds on the hill were his Yadavas. The Lord from Vykuntha manifested himself as Krishna on Venkatachala. The holy river Vraja became Suvarnamukhi. Sages Sanathkumara and others were born as vanaras on the hill. The glory of Venkatachala is not known to Brahma, Siva, or Indra even. How then can human beings know it ?

10. Lord Venkateswara meets Lord Varaha

Early one morning, the Lord again went out in search of a medicine for himself. Lord Varaha was there in the same forest after having killed Vrishabhasura. He happened to see Lord of Sri Venkatachala-Srinivas. "Who are you?" he questioned him. Seeing Sree Varaha, Lord Venkateswara retreated to the ant hill. Lord Varaha could recognise him as Sreehari come down from Vykuntha. Two incarnations of the Supreme Being, face to face! The Almighty assumes the body or bodies necessary for the time and place. The two incarnations are conversing with one another! What a sight! Gods came and showered flowers on them. After they left, Sree Varaha asked Sri Venkateswara "Mahabhaga, why did you leave Vykuntha and come here?" Sri Venkateswara narrated all about the curse pronounced on him by Bhrigu and the injury he received.

"I desire to stay here till the end of Kaliyuga. Kindly allot some site to me" Sreenivasa-requested Sri varaha.

"You had better pay compensation for the area you require," said Sree Varaha. Sreenivasa agreed. "But one condition, please" interrupted Sree Varaha. "I must get priority in worship; pilgrims should visit me first and only then you." The condition was accepted. A small piece (100 sqfeet) of land was then sold by Sri Varaha to Srinivasa. The Almighty is one. To mesmerise those who are not devotees, and enhance the devotion of the votaries, the two incarnations had acted just for fun and entertainment - Lord Varaha then allotted a maiden called Vakulamala for Sreenivasa's service.

This maid was none other than Yasoda, the foster mother of Krishna. Long ago, Yasoda desired to witness the wedd-

ing of Krishna. "Mother, your desire will be fulfilled in your next birth", promised Krishna then. Accordingly, Lord Krishna manifested himself as Venkateswara - Srinivasa. Yasoda was born as Vakulamala to look after the lord. The lord also behaved as an ordinary human being in the interests of his devotees. He sports for the good of his votaries. What a wonder ! Vakula is going to celebrate the marriage of Sri Venkateswara ! Is there anything impossible for the Gnanies and Vignanies, wise and learned ! Some worship the Lord, some are worshipped by Him. Hanuman is worshipped by every votary. Yet, he himself served Arjuna. Srihari is to be worshipped by all. In order to save the sinners in Kaliyuga, Lord Venkateswara behaved as an ordinary human being. But he is independent. He was not created by any one. How fortunate are those who visit the Lord and his abode ! Only those, who have accumulated their merit are fortunate to visit a Kshetra and that too Venkatachala.

11. Various names of Kreedadri

Springs of all sacred waters are present on Sri venka^a-chala. Hence the hill is called Teerthadri. Many holy lakes are located on it. So, it is named by sages and yogis as Pushkarini.

Dharma performed penance on the hill in order to improve himself. The hill acquired great renown as Vrishadri. The learned in Vedas call it so. It has the appearance of gold. So it is famous as Kanakadri. In ancient times a brahmin called Narayana did severe penance on it. As a result the hill acquired the illustrious name, Narayanadri. Having been brought down to Earth from Vykuntha it has been blessed with the name Vykunthadri. As the Almighty Lord Narayana incarnated as man-lion, Narasimha, on it to do away with the wicked demon Hiranyakasyapa, and save the demon's son, Prahalada, the hill is popular as Simhachala also. On this venerable hill Anjana gave birth to Hanuman. Hence, it acquired prominence as Anjanadri. It is famous as Varahadri and Varaha Kshetra also.

Neela, the Vanara leader resides on the hill permanently. So, great sages call it Neeladri. The hill is renowned as Venkatadri or Venkatachala. Gods styled it as "Srinivasagiri". The residents of Vykuntha eulogise it as Anandadri, the hill of bliss. As Goddess Sri also dwells on the hill, it is distinguished as 'Sri Saila' too.

Thus there are several names to the sacred hill. The appellations vary according to ages. The grandeur of the hill is beyond words to describe.

Brahma, Rudra and other Gods search for the A'mighty and arrive at Sri Venkatachala.

After Lord Sri Vishnu descended on Earth from Vykuntha and took up residence on Venkatachala, Gods went on searching for Him in Vykuntha. Unable to trace him there they went to Vrishadri. All sages and hermits also arrived there after having holy dips in Swami Pushkarini.

Sambhu, Brihaspathi, Sukra, Vasus, other gods, sages, Siddhas, and Kinneras also assembled on the banks of the holy Pushkarini after bathing in its holy waters. A wonderful Divine light having a Vimana (heavenly car) in its midst suddenly appeared before them. In it was seated Lord Sri Venkateswara holding Conch and Discus in two of his hands. His left fore-hand was resting on his left hip. His right fore-hand was held in a posture that assures favour. Goddess Lakshmi was seated in his chest.

Every one there prostrated before the Almighty and sang his praise thus. :

"Hail to you, Lord. Hail, O lord of the Universe. Hail to you, Sreenivasa, Ocean of Benevolence, Save us. Save us, Vishnu, Lord of Venkatachala, We salute you. Save us. O Lord of Universe, Grant us our desires." when thus all eulogised him the Lord revealed himself and said :

"Pleased am I with you all. Here am I to bless you all."

Then Brahma and other sages said "O Ocean of kindness, we prostrate before you, Lord of Venkatachala, Lord of the Universe. Obeisance to you. Be gracious enough to hear our humble petition. You have been granting all the desires of human beings.

You have been condoning their faults. You have been showing mercy; O-Lord. Remain here, Lord Kesava. Paying reverence to you, human beings in Kaliyuga got redeemed of their sins. Lord, reside here along with Goddess Lakshmi on the banks of Swami Pushkarini." The Lord heard the prayers and said "Be it so."

12. Sree Varaha Mantra

Goddess Dharani accompanied by her friend once met Lord Varaha on Narayana hill and asked him: "Lord of Lords, which is the Mantra that pleases you most always, by reciting Which wealth and prosperity are assured by you? What is that Mantra that a votary can safely rely on to reach your realm?"

Lord Varaha revealed the Mantra : "OM NAMAH SREE VARAHAYA DHARANYUDDHARANAYACHA. VAHNI JAYA SAMAYUKTHAHA" is the blessed Mantra said Sreevaraha.

"It grants all the desired objects of the seekers of God." Its Rishi is Sankarshana, and Deity Sri Varaha. The chandas is Pankti and the beeja is SREE. The Mantra should be taken from a preceptor and chanted four lakhs times. Oblations of rice, cooked with milk and mixed with honey and ghee should be offered in the fire. The invocatory sloka of the Mantra is "SUDDHA SPHATIKA SAILABHAM - RAKTHA PADMA DALEKSHANAM VARAHA VADANAM - SOWMYAM CHATURBAHU KIREETINAM SREEVATSA VAKSHASAM CHAKRA SANKHA ABHAYA KARAMBUJAM VAMORUSTHITAYA YUKTHAM TVAYA MAM SAGARAMBARE RAKTHA PEETHAMBARADHARAM RAKTABHARANABHOOSHITHAM SREE KOORMA PRISHTHA MADHYASTHA SESA MOORTYABJA SAMSTHITHAM."

If one recites the above Mantra one hundred and eight times he would attain success in all his desires."

After having heard the glory of the mantra from the Lord the Goddess wanted to know some more details. "Did any one in the past practice this? and if so, with what result?" she enquired. Sri Varaha answered—"In ancient times in the Krithayuga Dharma, the Manu followed this. He had my vision, obtained my benediction and reached my realm. Doorvasa pronounced a curse on Indra some time ago. Consequently Indra lost his high office. He uttered the mantra according to rules laid down and regained his kingdom. There are many other cases to illustrate. Anantha, the Lord of serpents received the mantra from Kasyapa, recited it in the White island and became a mountain. So, the mantra is very powerful, and should be recited by all human beings" concluded Sri Varaha.

13. Vayu's penance on Venkatachala

Once upon a time Vayu did very severe penance standing in the midst of fire and sitting on the ground during rain on Vrishabhachala. During the winter, he exposed his body to severe cold. Thus he carried on penance for one thousand years. Then Almighty Janarddana riding on eagle and accompanied by goddesses Sreedevi and Bhoodevi appeared before Vayu. All his celestial weapons also followed him. Vayu got up astonished and danced like a mad man. He prostrated himself before Sri Hari again and again and sang the Lord's praise thus :

“Profound adorations to you, Lord of Lords, Purushottama, the primeval being, Sreedhara, Anantha, Govinda, Jishnu, Vishnu. You are the only one Being in the beginning. Maya was with you. The whole universe. was a big sheet of water then. In it you rested on the serpent, Sesa. From your navel was born Brahma, the most learned. Resorting to the rajoguna, the second of the constituent qualities of all material substances you created the Universe. Resorting to the Satvaguna, the first of the constituents, you protect the Universe- Using the third of the qualities, namely, the tamoguna, you take back every thing created. From you were born the nine Prajapathis. From them were born the Devas, human beings and the Rakshasas. When Brahma was in peril, you killed the demons Madhu and Kaitabha. You killed demon, Somaka, assuming the shape of a fish and recovered the Vedas from him and delivered them to Brahma.

When the earth was without support you became a tortoise and rescued it from Pathala. You became a great Boar to destroy the wicked demon Hiranyaksha.

In order to save your votary, Prahlada, you became Narasimha (man-lion) and tearing the pillar open, manifested and killed the Demon Hiranyakasipa. Requested by Indra, you assumed the role of a brahmin bachelor boy, Vamana, and begged three feet of land from Bali and with those three feet you occupied all the worlds and gave them to Indra.

In order to kill the Rakshasas, who were kings, you became Parasurama, the great, made short work of all Kshatriyas and donated the whole earth to Kasyapa and enabled him to perform Yagna. You offered libations to your fore fathers with the blood of the Kshatriyas you killed. You then went to the western sea, constructed a building in it and performed penance.

In Tretayuga you became Rama, son of Dasaradha, went in exile to forest with your wife and brother and latteron killed Ravana, the demon, and erased his family. You were Balabhadra. You were Krishna, Vasudeva, the primeval Being.

You will be Kalkimat the end of Kaliyuga. You are Vishnu among Adityas and the Sun among the Lights. You are Pavaka among Vasus and Sambhu among Rudras. You are Budha among the Planets and Indra among all Gods, Kapila among Siddhas, Narada among all Devarshis. You are Japa Yagna among all Yagnas, tapas among the tapaswins Kubera among Yakshas, Yama among those who control their senses. You are the crocodile among the fish and Varuna among the aquatic animals. You are Ganga among the rivers, Sagara among the lakes, life giving breath Pranavayu among all winds, Chaturmukha among all Brhmas (Creators) and house-holder among ashramites. You are the moon among the stars, mind among senses, lion among animals, elephant among the four-legged animals, brahmin among the two legged, Garuda among the birds, Vasuki among serpents and Kalakuta, the deadliest poison, among poisons.

You are Anantha among Nagas, Meru among mountains, Himavan among hills, Sama among Vedas, Gayatri among chandasas, OM among mantras, celestial cow of plenty among animals, Agnihotra among those who partake of the offerings in Yagnas, and the holy fig tree among trees.

You are Skanda among commanders-in-chief, forbearance among the brave, sprout among the seeds, Vasishta among Brahmarshis, Pavana among the moving, the life bearing among the living creatures, Bhrgu among the sages, Vyasa among those versed in Vedas, Valmiki among poets, and ruler among the people.

Whatever is powerful or strong— you are that. O-thousand headed lord, obeisance to you. O-thousand handed and thousand legged, reverence to you. All your weapons shine all over the universe. Your faces are fierce. Your tusks create terror and shine like the rising sun. Your lotus and brilliant feet are numerous. They are worshipped by all.

They occupy the earth. The sky is your head. Your arms extend to all sides of the universe. O Lord, Mahavishnu, I salute you. The Vedas are your breath. The Sun and the moon are your eyes. The particles of your lustre are the stars. I bow to you, Lord.

You are the embodiment of time, its minute part, the day, night and the four yugas, O ! Anantha, I prostrate before you. You are time, its embodiment, its soul, its cause, and its knower. You cannot be known. O, personification of universe, profound adoration to you. Your forms have no beginning. O Madhusudana, salutations to you. O Brahman, you are the soul of life, and witness for all deeds. You are eternal, all pervading, steady, immovable, obeisance to you. You are body incarnate, nourisher of bodies, the soul of the body, mover of the bodies.

are smaller than the smallest, greater than the greatest, bigger than the biggest. O embodiment of Universe, salutations to you."

Concluding his prayer, Vayu sought refuge of the Lord. Pleased with the prayer of Vayu, the Lord said : " May you prosper, Vayu, ask anything you desire." Vayu replied: "Lord, I do not want any boon. I desire to be in your proximity for ever. " The Lord said : "whoever recites the prayer sung by you now shall have plenty to eat and shall attain salvation by my grace. Whoever chants it with devotion and attention, shall attain my vicinity within six months. You worship Skanda and Me daily till the end of this Kalpa. Then you will reach my proximity. "

Vayu returned to Devaloka. The Lord remained on Vrishachala with goddesses Sree and Bhoo. The hill was having natural beauty. The Lord remained there for sixteen years. Kumara, son of Lord Siva, saw him on an auspicious day in the month of Chaitra. Angels, Gandharvas and Kinneras offered worship to the Lord thrice daily while Apsaras danced before him to the accompaniment of melodious, musical instruments. The Lord spent a happy time north of a cave on the hill. The water falls named KUMARADHARA were nearby. Shanmukha did penance near them. Later on he proposed to stay there forever, worshipping Sri Venkateswara. He had no intention of returning to his own realm.

Several years passed by. Garuda wanted to go to Vishnu Loka carrying with him Vrishadri which contains gold and gems. Bhagavan Vishnu could know his intention. "You go to the southern peak of the hill, and stay there. I shall stay here. Sesha also will be here in the shape of a hill. I shall be here till the end of the present kalpa to protect the Universe. This hill shall have several names. In the Kruthayuga, its name would be Vrishadri. In the Tretha it would be called Garudachala. In the Dwapara age

its name would be Seshasaila. In the Kaliyuga it would be named Venkatadri. In the various ages, sages and human beings call Narayanadri by several other names also." So declared the Lord. He spent his time with Goddess Lakshmi on the banks of Swami Pushkarini.

Once, Lord Sankara told Parvathi: "we will also go to that sacred Hill where Skanda is now staying and reside there." He proceeded to Vrishachala, accompanied by his retinue and consort. He visited Aasthikuta, where bones of some dead were buried. Uma and Siva¹ bathed in the lake, paid obeisance to Sri Venkateswara and saw Skanda later on. They visited Swami Pushkarini and had a dip in it after obtaining the permission of Sreesa. They offered worship to Kapila Linga which was worshipped by Chakra, the Lord's discus.

Sudarshana, the discus of Lord Vishnu saw Lord Siva and paid reverence to him. "I am pleased with you O - Chakra, let me know your desire. It shall be granted" said Siva. "Lord, reside in my inner soul always as Bhima², the terrific, Soumya the mild, Varada, the benefactor of wishes, and Mrityuha the destroyer of death" prayed Chakra. "By the grace of Vishnu, I have great affection for you. The inner soul of every one is one and only one, Narayana. However, I could understand your desire by my Yogic power. I shall fulfil your ambition. The body of Vishnu is pure Satwic (Virtuous) endowed with goodness, replete with Yajna. I am a receptacle of Tamoguna, darkness or ignorance. I am afraid even to touch Vishnu: so you do one thing. I shall enter your body. Surrounded by garlands of lights, hold me in your heart, treating me as having one hundred hands or 28 or 16 or 8 armed. I shall be worshipped by the World being seated in your heart. I shall be considered as the embodiment of the Trinity" said Siva. Granting the boon, he remained there invisible.

Chakra returned to Panchayudha lake and engaged himself in penance unnoticed by others.

14. Agastya's penance on Venkatachala

Inspired by Vayu several other aspirants and seekers of truth undertook penance on Venkatachala. Thus, Venkatachala acquired fame. Sage Agastya did tapas on Malayachala desiring to see the Almighty. Brahma told him that at Venkatachala his ambition would be fulfilled. The sage came to Venkatachala and did penance there for one thousand celestial years.

After that period, Agastya heard a heavenly voice thus :-
"There are one thousand and eight sacred teerthas on Venkatachala. Have holy dips in each of them and bring out their glory. There is no other penance suitable for the twice born. What is it that you can achieve by torturing your physical body? Preach your disciples the glory of Venkatachala. Go round the hill. In the sixth round you will have the vision of Brahma, Devendra and others. On the South-western side of the hill you will see Yakshas, Rakshas and Pisachas. On the North western side Viswakshena and some other sages can be seen. On the Northern side devotees of the Almighty and ascetics are to be found. On the banks of Swami Pushkarini you will gain knowledge about the glory of the hill. Resort to meditation there. You will realise the Almighty."

Agastya did as directed by the Heavenly voice. Meditating on the Almighty, he had the vision of Lord Vishnu. Thus Venkatachala acquired prominence through sage Agastya also.

Agastya prayed to the Lord to make himself visible to every one. The Lord said : "At your request I shall here after be visible to all. But the Vimana shall remain invisible."

Sri Venkateswara with his four hands had become visible to humanity since then. A new Vimana was later on raised by

5. Chakravarthi the Chola king

There was a certain Chola king who was famous, hteous, well read and mighty. Once he went on horse-back to orest near Seshachala for hunting. He saw some caves. He urd the roarings of wild animals and chased the animals. He d no rest at all. While in the wilderness, busy hunting, he openned to see a beautiful young girl. The girl walked like a in. Her face was like the full moon. Her eyes were charming : lotus petals. She was plucking and collecting flowers. The g was fascinated by her glamourous charm. He left his army . approached her. Attracted towards the king the girl also ld not step further. Her hands held the flower while her eyes d the king. The king questioned the girl "Who are you, lovely y of matchless beauty, moving in the forest without fear? Who our father? Who is your mother? Where do you reside? By by, are you married? You seem to be of marriagiable age." If are not married already I would like to make yon mine " he ed.

"I am the daughter of Dhanamjaya, the king of serpents. e in Pathala under the care of my father. My father is worried ut my marriage pondering over always as to who would be my and. Please go to Pathala. Get my father's consent ediatey. He will grant it readily. Kindly have patience until t" said the girl. The king replied "I adhere to the traditions.

Gandharva type of marriage has the sanction of sages. Our riage according to that will be a valid one accepted by scriptu-

There is nothing wrong. Kindly oblige me. I love you. I ot live without you." The girl expressed her tacit willingness

by scratching on the ground under her feet with her toes. The king consulted the royal astrologers and fixed up a day for the wedding. He and the girl spent some happy time. Later on, the girl left for Pathala. She met her father and narrated everything to him. Her father, the king of Nagas, was also happy.

The Chola king returned to his City retaining his mind and heart on the girl, the Nagakanya. Royal astrologers predicted that the princess would give birth to a male child who would become an ideal emperor of the world. In course of time the Naga princess delivered a male child. The child grew up. One day the boy asked his mother to show him his father. The mother told the son all that took place leading to his birth.

"Mother, I want to see my father. I want to go to Bhuloka. Kindly permit me and guide me about the route" asked the boy. The mother showed her son the passage to the earth. The boy went and met the Chola king. He prostrated himself before the king. "Who are you my dear boy?" questioned the king. The boy enlightened the king about himself. The king felt suspicious. He sent for the astrologers. Meanwhile a heavenly voice was heard declaring "O king, do not be worried. This is your son. You need not doubt. He will become a great emperor and a votary of Sreevishnu. He will worship the Lord who manifested himself on Seshadri. The Lord will be pleased and will reveal himself personally and play with your son daily transgressing his form which is worshipped. Crown your son as emperor." The king went to the spot where he met Naga kanya some time ago, and erected a city there. The city was named after the new emperor, who became popular as 'Chakravarthi' and ruled over the entire world.

One day some cow boys, servants of Chakravarthi met him and said "King, we are cowherds. Wewear your cows and move

with them. We were keeping with us a pot-full of milk. We kept it today at a spot and were wandering. When we returned to the pot, we saw a big ant-hill but not the milk pot. Kindly investigate into the mystery." The king thought it was an act of God. Thinking about Lord Hrishikesa he went to his bed. He had a dream that night. The next morning he consulted his ministers saying: "I saw in my dream last night a wonderful person. Perhaps, one would have seen such a one. He was very handsome, dark like blue cloud, and had wide eyes. I questioned him "Who are you? where do you come from? what can I do for you? what for are you here?" He replied, "I am sent here by Srinivasa of Devendragiri. I reside on Seshadri, the wonderful and glorious Venkatagiri. I am directed to tell you something. The Icon of the Lord there holding the discus and conch with Sreedevi and hooded, on either side is splendid. To the south of the hill is the Capital. On the sacred hill, all the thirty three crores of gods, great sages, Yogis and Siddhas reside. All holy teerthas are so there. All the eight supernatural powers are there. East of the Hill the holy Kalahasthi is located. Lord Mahadeva resides in it. River Suvarnamukhi runs north of Kalahasthi. It is worshipped by sages. Great sages like Suka reside on its bank engaged in austere penance invoking the Lord of Seshachala. All people who live within seven yojanas of the hill are blessed. They are free from sins, and finally they reach Vishnuloka. Then they talk about people who chant the holy Ashtakshari (eight syllabled) mantra? I was invited to visit the holy hill. I went there. I was shown the hill and the celestial shrine with a lustrous manam which disappeared in a moment along with the person who showed it to me. This was all my dream. I was wondering what its implications could be!"

The ministers explained to the king that the Almighty was the ant-hill. "You better wash and bathe the idol in it after

flooding it with milk. He will be manifesting himself then " they said.

Meanwhile Vasu, a Nishada, a black-hunter with a sword, bow and arrows dressing his hair with peacock-feathers and fine leaves arrived and saluted the king and said "Sir, I reside on Seshadri and grow some dry crops. Dry crop cultivation is my profession. Daily a white boar comes and eats my crops. I instructed my son to protect the crops and went out to get some honey to offer to the Lord. Before I could return, my son ate the grain after pounding it in his hands. I never ate anything without first offering it to God. So, I got wild and attempted to kill my son. He began to weep. Then a heavenly voice cautioned me thus :-

"Do not kill your son. God has already accepted his offering. He is pleased also. Go to Chakravarthi. Tell him all that took place and convince him. He will come." Hence I have come to report to you.

The king verified the cow-boy's version with his dream and the version of the hunter and left to the spot accompanied by the hunter and ordering one thousand cows milk to be brought to Seshachala. He saw the sacred Vimana and a white strong boar eating the crop and strolling. He saw the sacred and wonderful Vimana nicely decorated and lustrously shining. The boar entered the ant-hill as the king approached him. The king could not see the Vimana again. He was astonished and asked the hunter to enlighten him about the wonder. The Sabara said " This boar is not an ordinary one. He is the Almighty who rescued the earth. The Vimana was never seen before. Sri Varaha, the boar resides in this ant-hill. He comes out sometimes and re-enters it. So get the ant-hill dug up sir, we will see."

The king did not venture to get the excavation made. He got thousands of pots—full of milk and flooded the ant-hill with it. Consequently, the shining Vimana revealed itself. The king prostrated himself before it. In the Vimana was found the Lord, blue as a cloud, seated in a lotus posture, holding the Sankha and Chakra, wearing the Sreevatsa and clad in yellow silk clothes shining like million gems. Lord Vasudeva—Srinivasa, worshipped by all gods manifested himself. The king sang the praise of the Lord thus. “O Lord, I see the divine form of Yours which sages and sages only could witness in the past. You are the Almighty. I see your divine body due to my good fortune. You are the doer of all things and the recipient of their fruit. You are the medium. There is no one except you. You are the all. By your mere will everything is created. You are the preserver of all.

In the beginning, there was no Brahma, no Isa, no Sky, no ether, no Universe. You were the only one. You were everything existing on your serpent bed. You created everything. In the beginning there was nothing except yourself. You are the end of all. You are the truth. Vedas sing your praise. You are the knowledge. Now before you. You are the Time and destroyer of everything, creator, protector and destroyer. You are the All. You are Yagna, its doer, the Manthra of Yagna and the Fire. You are the all pervasive. Goddess Lakshmi is your permanent companion. I seek refuge in you the friend of Padma, the saviour of those in troubles, the auspicious. You are the end and the beginning of everything.” Thus praying Chakravarthi prostrated himself before the Lord time and again. The Almighty was pleased and announced in a thunderous voice. “I am happy with your devotion. I shall grant whatever you desire. Be not worried.”

The king said "To have a vision of yours is impossible. Be pleased to stay here for ever for the good of the humanity, O Lord." The Lord conceded and declared "You are my votary. There is no one to equal you. I am pleased with you. I shall grant you my companionship. Arrange my service thrice daily." The king was glad. He used to offer worship to the lord thrice every day. He took up residence in the Town nearby to serve the Lord. During the worship the Lord did not remain as an Icon only.

6. Brahma, Rudra and other Gods worship the Lord

Once, Chakravarthi was celebrating the flag hoisting tival of Sri Venkateswara, with devotion. the SUN was in Virgo n. The Garuda flag was hoisted on the flagstaff. Brahma, Indra d the other rulers of the corners of the world and the invitees ived. Brahma rode on swan back. Saakara arrived on his l accompanied by Girija. Indra arrived on his elephant. Narada o was present playing on his Veena and singing. Rulers and ple from every nook and corner arrived to worship Sri Venkate- ra. The crowds were so unprecedented. The celebrations there r became an annual feature. Ordered by Vasava, a beautiful en chariot was got ready. It was studded with gems. After eight s of festivity on the day the moon was in conjuncton with star rana the final bath was given to the Discus in the holy waters acred Swami Pushkarini. On the final day the flag was lowered. rings were made to Sri Venkateswara and the deities were red worship. Thus the festival ended.

17. Lord Sri Venkateswara visits the Yaga conducted by Maharshis

Lord Sri Venkateswara once assumed the role of a paramour and had a stroll on the northern side of Venkatachala. His consort was by his side. Some sages were narrating the greatness of the hill there. "It is full of all types of fruit bearing and flower yielding trees, springs and rivulets. This is a very splendid spot. Let us perform a Yagna here" they thought. The sages commenced a Yagna addressed to Lord Vishnu.

Lord Venkateswara arrived at the Yagna. He wore beautiful golden clothes. He had a diadem on his head. He held a sword in his hand. His face was glittering with smiles. His eyes were broad. His neck was like a conch. His arms were long. He was like cupid incarnate. His charm was enchanting the worlds. He wore a golden sacred thread also.

He entered the assembly of sages in the guise of a lovely courtesan. He was chewing betel leaves. The sages were struck with wonder at the sight of the uninvited visitor.

"What for have you come here?" they questioned him. "Where is your residence? who are your parents? what is your name?" they went on questioning. "I am neither a king nor a brahmin. In fact I do not have any caste. Neither have I any residence. I dwell every where. I eat every thing. I go every where. I assume all bodies. I do not have a name. I have come to see you. You are all great sages. How is it

there are omissions in the procedure of the rituals you are adopting ?” the intruder observed.

“The time for offerings in the sacrifice is fast flowing. So we are in a hurry to offer the sacrifice” the sages replied. The Lord rushed to the place of sacrifice and himself received the offering with both his hands. The sages were astonished. “I am pleased” the Lord said and disappeared.

“The Almighty Vishnu has descended. We are extremely lucky indeed. We are blessed,” exclaimed the sages. They continued the rest of the Yaga with greater enthusiasm.

18. Sages and Gods visit Milky ocean

Long long ago some sages and gods were persecuted by the descendants of Hiranyakasipa. They wanted to represent their woes to Lord Vishnu and went to the northern coast of the Milky ocean and sang the praise of Lord Janardana thus : "Lord, Creator, Preserver and destroyer of the Universe, the only one in the beginning, salutations to you. Having undertaken to rule over the Universe you are resting on your serpent bed now, without considering our fate at all. Lord, why have you now neglected us? save us, save us." While they were praying, an attendant of Vishnu holding the Sankha, Chakra and mace in his hands appeared and said "The Lord is not here. He is somewhere on the earth. Why have you all come here? Please go there." The sages and gods wondered. "What for has he left the Milky Ocean and gone to earth?" they discussed among themselves. They were about to leave for Vykuntha. On their way they met Narada returning from Vykuntha playing on his Mahaa Veena. "What Narada? holy sage, there is nothing in the three worlds unknown to you. Let us know please where is Lord Vishnu now? Some wicked demons have been molesting us anchorites, Yogis and people near Sreesaila. Ravana and his demons have been troubling us always. Vishnu alone can save us now. So we have come to seek his protection. Kindly tell us where is he now?" Narada replied "I have also come to see Vishnu. I was told that he is somewhere on a hill on the earth. So I am returning. Come, let us all go and see Brahma who knows every thing." All then proceeded to Brahma's region.

The four faced Lord was sitting on a charming throne shining like fire. Gayatri, Savitri and Saraswathi were attending on him. Kinneras, Urugas and many celestial beings were worshipping him. Vedas and Sastras were extolling him. The visitors paid their respects to Brahma and took their seats. After mutual exchange of courtesies they said : "Lord, you are our only saviour now. Till now we were happy by your grace. Now we are in troubles. We have come to represent them to you. The demons of Ravana have been teasing us. They are a menace to us. We went to see Lord Vishnu and seek his protection. But he is not there. Save us from this peril. Lord," Brahma contemplated for a while and observed : "Ravana performed very severe penance. I granted him a boon by which he would not be killed by any other than a human being. He is therefore indulging in atrocities. I shall also accompany you. Let us all go and pray to Lord Vishnu who is on Venkatagiri." So saying Brahma described Venkatachala, the sacred hill, its surroundings and the natural beauty around it and added : "King Dasaratha of Ikshvaku dynasty will come to Venkatadri and undertake penance on the banks of Swami Pushkarini with a desire to beget sons. Vishnu, the Almighty will manifest himself before him."

All the sages and Brahma then went to Seshadri. The hill was full of animals, birds and trees. All trees were either fruit bearing or flower yielding. Gandharvas and Siddhas were worshipping the hill. Apsaras were dancing. The sages felt refreshed on seeing the hill. They had holy dips in all the lakes and prayed to Lord Sreenivasa. But they could find neither a temple nor a tower. They continued their search.

19. King Dasaratha visits Sri Venkatachala

King Dasaratha was ruling over the country with Ayodhya as his capital. He was very famous and righteous. But he had no children. One day he asked his family priest, Vasishtha "Sir, I am a sinner. I have no children. How can my sins be liquidated, and I can have sons?" Vasishtha went into contemplation for a while and said : "You are a righteous king. How would you acquire any sin?" "But", he added, "I am able to know that you had committed some minor sins. I shall tell you how you can be redeemed of them." Vasishtha then described the steps to be taken for the liberation of Dasaratha from the sins.

"Vishnubhagavan can now be seen near the Suvarnamukhi river on Venkatachala. The place is a sacred and beautiful one with holy lakes and inhabited by Kinneras. Lord Narayana manifested himself there. Many sages visit the place to have his vision. Sages engaged in penance are to be found on the hill. If you go there your desires will be fulfilled."

Crossing the holy rivers Godavari, Krishna and others on the way; King Dasaratha proceeded to Venkatachala. He had dips in the holy rivers and saw the sacred Venkata Sails which looked like the great Meru mountain. He bathed in the pushkarini and freed himself from sins. Having been purified he felt happy. He saw there several anchorites and sages doing penance. Some of them were gazing at the Sun. Some were

bodies in various Yogic postures. Some were standing in water. Some were doing Pranayama. Some wore tiger skins while others wore deer skins and barks of trees. Some were offering libations and some were doing Homas. Some were worshipping Hari with flowers and offering fruits and cooked coloured rice. Yet some others were worshipping him with leaves of bilva and tulasi. Mantras such as, Gopala, Varaha, Ashta Lakshmi, Dwadasakshari were being chanted by many. In the midst of the sages was sitting erect on a tiger skin Brahma in contemplation, concentrating on the tip of his nose. Dasaratha paid obeisance to the sages and Brahma. He took his seat before them. Addressing him Vasishtha said : "Brahma is doing severe penance here along with several other sages. Very soon, Lord Vishnu will manifest himself here. O King, have a holy dip in the sacred Swami Pushkarini and start muttering prayers and Japa." Dasaratha requested Vasishtha to initiate him the necessary Mantra. He was initiated. He began to mutter the twelve syllabelled Mantra sitting at an even place near the Pushkarini in front of a Yantra specially drawn and after worshipping Lord Srinivasa. Vasishtha also was seated on grass. He also began to recite the Mantra. Shortly afterwards a great sound was heard. All were horrified. A brilliant light, as great as all the lightnings put together, was seen. It was as though millions of suns and moons appeared simultaneously. None could understand what it was. In the midst of the light a dazzling Vimana sprang up. It had several towers, compound walls, gates, gem-studded festoons and flags in it. Decorated exquisitely it was giving out a steady brilliant light. There were many fruit bearing and flower bearing trees in it. A good play-ground also was there.

There were also elephants, horses, chariots, birds and animals of various kinds. Fine and fragrant breeze was blowing. Multifarious musical instruments were producing melodious notes,

Every thing was pleasing to the eyes, and satisfying to the hearts. Angels were dancing. Beautiful women were handling fans and umbrellas. Every one present saw the wonderful Vimana and was amazed. All stood staring at it.

Brahma then called all the sages, and Indra, and said "this wonderful celestial Vimana, fit to be worshipped by Indra also shines like the Great Vishnu Mandir. Let us go into it and see." All entered the first gate of the Vimana. Chanda and Prachanda, the gate keepers, permitted them with reverence, to enter. After crossing seven gates the visitors saw Lord Vishnu. Flowers were raining and celestial drums were being beaten. There was celestial music echoing three worlds. All the planets, Rudras, Devathas, Nagas and Yakshas assembled to have a Darshan of the Lord and to pay homage to Him.

With a smiling face, crowned head and dazzling ornaments Lord Vishnu was shining most brilliantly like the Sun, in the Vimana. Goddesses Lakshmi and Bhodevi were on either of his side. All the visitors and Dasaratha saw the Lord. The Lord wore yellow silk robes. He had four arms. His teeth were brilliant. He outshone millions of cupids in splendour. He was compassion, patience and tranquility personified. He was magnanimity manifested. His nails were as brilliant as the rising full-moon. He was seated near a parijatha tree, tree of Paradise.

He had a beautiful golden belt around his waist and a knife hanging from it. Every one present had a direct vision of the Lord, the vision for which sages do penance for long. All were extremely happy. They feasted their eyes. They danced. Tears of joy rolled from their eyes. Every one saw the Almighty again and again. All were immersed in joy.

Then Agastya and other sages began to praise the Lord thus :

“Obeisance to you, O Lord, you are the penance, its doer’ bestower and receiver of its fruit. Yagna is dear to you. You are every religious act, Sraddha and Dana. You are also every such act intended to other Gods. Any good deed done meditating on you is a complete dedication to you. You are pleased by action alone. Pleased by tapas you bestow everything. Forgive us, Lord, our short-comings.” The Lord was pleased with the prayer

Indra and other Gods continued their prayers, saying : “OM, salutations to you, Venkateswara, Sreemannarayana, Kesava Vasudeva, Hrishikesa, Vamana, salutations to you. Lord, you have rescued the Earth in order that all creatures may dwell on it. You have saved Devathas, by distributing nectar extracted from the ocean. No one can comprehend you, Lord. You are thousand headed some times, thousand eyed, and thousand-footed some times. Yet you are sometimes without hands or feet.

You appear as sky sometimes, you have no shape sometimes. You are known by knowledge only. Every limb of yours is very charming. You are always most charming. Lord of the Universe, we bow before you.”

Then Sanaka and other sages eulogised the Lord thus : “Lord, you dwell in Vykuntha, you are the source of the Universe. You are the Universe. Salutations to you. You are smaller than the smallest atom. You are known by mind and knowledge. You are self-illuminating. You are the prop of every thing. O Dark blue hued Lord, holder of Sanka, Chakra and Gada, obeisance to you. Your feet are our sole refuge.”

Then Dasaradha offered his invocation thus : “Lord, in order to have your vision Indra and other great Gods performed penance. The Goddess of wealth desires your grace always.

Oh Vishnu, there is none greater than you. You are the only one to whom all should offer prayers. Ever blissful Lord, you are the all. What else can I say ?”

Finally Brahma offered his prayer thus : “Lord, in the beginning you were the only One, Narayana. You created water and released the vital force. An egg was formed. Later on you created me. Then I created human beings. You are the primary origin for the whole creation. You are its source. You are the soul of the Universe. You are the master of all. All others enjoy or suffer the fruits of their own deeds. You are the regulator of all. You are the one who grants happiness to every other. You are spiritual knowledge. You are truth. Infinite are your forms. You are the bliss. None can know you. I was born from your navel. How can I praise you? You are an ocean of virtues.

Pardon me and my short-comings. Favour me with your grace.”

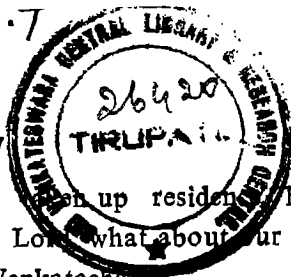
Thus every one sang the praise of the Lord and opened up his mind before the Almighty. The ever compassionate Lord cast his sympathetic looks at them and asked in a thunderous voice :

“Brahma, I am pleased with your prayer. You have come here along with other gods and sages. Let me know the purpose of your visit.” Brahma replied thus : “Long ago, a demon called Ravana, the son of Visravas did great penance and obtained my boon that he would not be killed by any one except a human being. Taking advantage of the boon he had been troubling every one. He had become a menace to brahmins. We had gone to Vykuntha and Kshieerasagara to represent to you. We could not see you there. We have come here to seek your protection learning that you are here. You are the only saviour

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Sri Venkatachala—Its Glory



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of the Universe. You have been up residing here leaving Vykuntha and Milky Ocean. Lord, what about our fate? What is our recourse? O Lord of Venkatachala.

Bhagavan Vishnu assured all the supplicants his helping hand. "Brahma, I am the only refuge for you all. You need not fear. Very soon I shall be doing away with that demon Ravana. Rest assured," he announced. Turning to Agastya, he extended a hearty welcome to him and enquired about him. "My Lord, I have come to have your darshan. I have a humble submission too to make. Near Sreesaila there are some Rakshasas. They are arrogant on account of the boons they secured. They are now troubling every one. How can people suffer under your very nose? How is it that they are neglected thus? The, virtuous indeed need protection. The wicked deserve punishment. By your grace, mankind should live free from dangers. They should have prosperity longevity, health and wealth. Kindly save them," represented the great sage. Brahma and others also requested the Lord to take urgent action. The Lord declared :

"Now itself I shall grant you the boon. I shall eliminate all the wicked and ensure safety, health and wealth to every one. Every human being shall live for one hundred years. I shall grant these blessings even if one does not ask me." The Lord then welcomed Sankara. The sages again submitted : "Lord of Seshagiri, this is a sacred country. Penance made here rewards quick results. But the troubles caused by the wicked are unbearable. We pray, Lord, make this region happy. Please reside on this holy hill. What is the use of your staying somewhere invisible to all human beings? Kindly make yourself visible to all." The Almighty complied with the request. He asked Indra whether he had anything to say. "Lord, We are being molested by Ravana. We have

been ousted from our posts" said Indra. "I shall eliminate the thorn very soon" assured the Lord, who then enquired Sankara the purposes of his visit. "Stay for ever where you are now, O Lord" requested Siva. The Lord said "I shall stay on Venkatachala till the end of the present Kalpa. You also stay at the foot of the hill." He then turned to Dasaratha and asked "I am seeing you after a long time. What is your purpose?" Dasaratha replied "My Lord, Achyuta, by your grace I enjoyed the kingdom and wealth for long. I had humbled all my enemies. But alas I have no sons. It is said that one without sons has no place in the other world. Pray, grant me a son, one who will be famous and outstanding in valour in the Universe." The Lord observed "O king, the past is responsible for the present. What shall I do?"

Dasaratha then pointed out "Lord, will darkness exist after the sun rises? All sins vanish at your sight. I have seen you, Lord. How can sins effect me still? The Lord was pleased with Dasaratha's entreaty and said "You have sung my praise in four slokas. So you will have four sons, who will be brave ideal and valiant heroes as brave as myself. Return to Ayodhya and perform sacrifice." Dasaratha was very happy. He thanked the Almighty and extolled him. He went round Srivishnu several times and praised him. Accompanied by his party he returned to Ayodhya.

Lord Vishnu then called Brahma and said "It is getting late. Have you anything else to say? Ask. I shall grant your request. Brahma requested the Lord to stay on Venkatachala to be within reach of human beings also. "In the Kaliage every one will hanker after personal comforts only. None will know righteousness on earth. All will be feeble, sick and full

a sinner then. Such people will have to go to hell after death. Merciful Lord, be pleased to stay on Venkatachala in the interest of the world" Brahma requested. The Lord said "You have asked me a great boon. You are kind to all creatures. I shall stay here as desired by you with my consorts till the end of the Kalpa. The penance of those who perform it here shall bear fruit. Similarly yagnas and yagas performed here shall fructify.

20. Sri Rama visits Sree Venkatachala

After some time Dasaratha had four sons, Sri Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna

Sreerama accompanied by Lakshmana, Hanuman, Sugreeva and the army of monkeys visited Venkatachala while on his way in search of Sita. Anjana, mother of Hanuman met him and said "Rama, waiting for you several sages have been performing penance on this hill. Kindly visit all of them." Sreerama replied "I have a very tight programme ahead. On my way back to Ayodhya I shall do as suggested by you." Hanuman intervened and said "Lord, you can keep your army here and go to see your devotees and forest also. After-wards you may do as you like." Sreerama smiled and agreed. The army was retained at the foot of the hill. Rama, Hanuman and Lakshmana ascended the hill. The forest on the hill was full of all kinds of trees, birds and animals. Several sages were engaged in severe penance there. On the northern side of the hill Nirloma, a brahmin well versed in Vedas was doing Tapas. Long ago Brahma manifested himself before him and assured that he would reach the supreme realm after Sreerama and Lakshmana met him. Rama and Lakshmana saw Nirloma. "Blessed I am today. O Lord, by your vision. Grant me a place in Brahma loka" requested Nirloma. Rama granted his request and proceeded further. After bathing in the Pushkarni he presented fruits to the sages. On the south western part of the hill Hanuman got some hermitages raised. He collected fruits and roots and offered them to Rama and Lakshmana.

The monkeys and bears sported on the trees and hills. Some kissed others. Some played with others' tails. All shouted "We will destroy Ravana and his army." They roared "We will uproot Lanka and the mountains there and hurl them in the ocean. We will do anything, go any where, let it be Rasatala, for the sake of Rama to kill Ravana."

Vanaras Enter Vykuntha Cave

To the north east of Swami Pushkarini Vanara leaders Gaja, Gavaksha and some others found a cave and entered it. It was dark. Inside the cave the Vanaras saw a brilliant light and a golden city having lovely gardens, rivers with pure water, and towers studded with gems. There were many palatial buildings and mandapas. The citizens were charming. All males had four arms each. Every one held a conch and a discus and wore pure white clothes. Every one had beautiful ornaments and was graceful to look at. In their midst was a lofty Vimana, a celestial one, shining like the sun. Heavenly music of kinners was flowing from it. In the Vimana was seated on a golden seat a divine being, four armed, full moon faced, holding a discus and a conch. His diadem was emitting lustre. He wore pretty ornaments on his body. Sreedevi, Bhoodevi and Neeladevi were attending on him. The Vanaras were taken aback on seeing Him. The attendants of the Lord threatened the Vanaras. The Vanaras ran away from there.

"He must be Ravana, the cheat. Let us verify and make sure" they thought. They left the cave and came out. But lo! there was no city. Not even its trace. Quickly they left the hill convinced that it was all an illusion. The cave called Vykuntha was a city which sprang up by the illusion spread

by Gods. The beings in it were all liberated ones- living in everlasting bliss. They go as they please, assuming any form or body they like. When Kali age enters they come and stay in the cave. Such is Seshadri, where celestial beings live ! Lord Sri Venkateswara resides on the peak of Neeladri being worshipped by the ever learned.

Later on Rama killed Ravana, recovered Seetha, and returned to his capital. He ruled over his kingdom well by virtue of the merit achieved by his holy dips in the sacred Swami Pushkarini also.

21. The Glory of Sree Venkatachala

Narada, during his extensive wanderings, once visited the hermitage of sage Bhrigu. Bhrigu and his disciples received him with honour extending all courtesies. Bhrigu then asked Narada: "Narada, you move about in the whole universe. There is nothing unknown to you. Let me know the name of the kshetra which is the best on the Earth, where Lord Vishnu manifested himself with his consort, Lakshmi and where ascetics get their penance rewarded easily." Narada answered that the most holy kshetra on the earth was "Sree Venkatagiri" where Lord Madhava and his consort dwell. "The holy place is famous by several other names also, viz., Anjanadri, Vrishadri, Seshadri, Garudadri, Teerthadri, Sriniwasadri, Chintamanigiri, Vrishabhadri, Varahadri, Gnanadri, Kanakachala, Anandadri, Neeladri, Sumeru, Sikharachala, Vykunthadri and Pushkaradri. Anyone who recites these names gets liberated from all bondages. In the entire universe there is no place equal to Venkatadri. There is no God equal to Venkatachalapati. On Venkatachala are located several teerthas worshipped by Suras, and Siddhas. The teerthas are water sources capable of redeeming all sins and conferring prosperity. Of all these, Swami Pushkarini is the most auspicious one. By its side added Narada dwells Lord Srechari."

Bhrigu then asked Narada:- "Leaving Vykuntha what for Lord Narayana dwells on that hill?" Narada replied: "Once, I went to the Milky ocean to pay homage to Lord Narayana. In the great White Island, in the garden of Kalpa"

vrikshas, the celestial wish yielding tree in a golden palace, beautifully decorated, I saw the chamber of Lord Vishnu shining with the lustre of a thousand suns. In that chamber was the Almighty Hrishikesa resting on his serpent bed. With a charming body looking like a dark blue cloud on a silver hill the Lord was being attended to by Goddesses Sri and Bhodevis. He held the Conch and Chakra. With the Sreevatsa on his body his eyes were like lotus petals. He had brilliant ear ornaments. He wore Vyjayanthi around his neck. The yellow silk cloth he had put on was dazzling. The ornaments on his body were gem-set. Rings set with diamonds adorned his fingers. Near him were sages Markandeya, Bharadwaja, Pundaleeka, Suka, Yagnavalkya, and others, singing his glory. Prahlada and other great votaries, Sanaka, Sananda and some Yogis were offering prayers to him. Brahma, Rudra and other Gods were by his side with their heads bent and hands folded. The Lord received me with paternal affection and asked me : "Narada, my dear son, you are acquainted with the three worlds. Tell me whether there is any lovely place seen by you on the earth suitable for my excursion and rest." I replied : "Lord, there is nothing not known to you in the three worlds. Yet, out of affection you have enquired me. To the south of River Ganga and west of the eastern sea there is one delightful and suitable area for your excursion. People suffering from various calamities are also found there praying for relief. It is quite suitable for you to stay." The Lord then said, : "a son of the king of Chola, called Chakravarthi, a devotee of mine, will be worshipping me in the Kali age. In order to bless him also I shall be staying there."

Of all the sacred places in the world Sree Venkatachala is the most sacred as Lord Purushottama resides on it with all

his grandeur. Holding the conch and discus and assuming fearlessness to his devotees he shines supreme on the Hill. Votaries from different parts of the country visit the place with their families to pay obeisance to the Lord and worship him. Anyone who has the Darshan of Sree Venkateswara once even, gets merged in him. The merit gained in ten years in the Krithayuga is achieved in one year in Tretayuga. That which is attained in five months in Dwapara age is achieved in a single day in Kali Yuga. That merit will multiply by ten million times every minute. Those who think of Sreenivasa, the great Lord of Venkatachala, are liberated from all their sins. Venkateswara is the God of Gods. His name itself drives away the worst difficulties of humanity. Why then should any one resort to Vratas of Tapas? In Lord Srinivasa is seen every other God. There is no need to go on pilgrimage to other centres. Blessed is the person born on this earth, who offers worship to Lord Venkateswara or has the vision of the Lord, the supreme God Head. Anyone who pays adoration to Sri Venkateswara can have no difficulties. He need not go to the land of Yama. One who desires ever lasting happiness and a place in Heaven should worship Lord Venkateswara. In whatever state one might be, if he thinks of Lord Venkateswara, he will be redeemed of all calamities. Just as fire burns wood all sins are burnt to ashes by a visit to Sri Venkateswara. Caste is no bar before the Lord.

There are eight kinds of devotion to Sree Venkateswara. They are

- i) Association with and affection for His votaries;
- ii) Worshipping the Lord with devotion;
- iii) Pleasing His devotees with good deeds;
- iv) Listening to the stories depicting His Glory;
- v) Seeing the Lord every where

- vi) Remembering Him always ;
- vii) Depending on the Lord and
- viii) Residing on Venkatachala earning livelihood on it only.

Any one who hates the Lord will be thrown into Hell. It is a sin to talk to any one who hates Sri Venkateswara. Srinivasa is the Supreme Lord. Leaving all other Gods, one should seek refuge in that Lord. Remembering Srinivasa for two ghatikas even confers great merit. One should bathe in Swami Pushkarini and visit Lord Srinivasa. There can be no worry for such a one. All holy lakes, oceans, forests, ashrams, holy places, sages, Sridevi, Bhodevi, Savitri, Saraswathi, Brahma, Madhusudana and all other Gods, planets and manes reside on Venkatachala worshipping Sree Venkateswara always. When anyone ascends Venkatachala or stays on it, he should offer invocation thus :

"O Golden mountain whom Brahma and others worship, I am setting my feet on you. I am committing sin against you. Kindly pardon me. Permit me to see the Lord, who is on your head." Thus praying one should slowly pace on the hill. After having a dip in the holy Pushkarini following the prescribed procedure he should offer Pindas to his deceased parents. The souls of his deceased parents and ancestors will be appeased and elevated to Heaven."

Thus, sootha stated that Sri Venkatachala is the most sacred place where Lord Madhava wants to stay. The Lord likes it most and wants to spend his time happily there. To all other questions Sootha answered "he is Venkatachala. - It is Venkatachala",

22. Bhishma narrates to Pandavas the descent of Sri Vishnu on Sri Venkatachala

Yudhisthira, the eldest of the Pandavas once requested Bhishma to enlighten him as to how Lord Vishnu happened to manifest himself on Vrushabhachala. Bhishma narrated thus : "Narada, the celebrated sage desired to see Sreshari, once upon a time. He went to Vykuntha and later he saw near the ocean of milk Sages Agastya, Vyasa and other Rishis also going to see the Lord." "Narada, blessed are you, you are the only votary of Vishnu. You sing his praise always. It is Sreehari alone who can grant salvation to human beings. Hari is the creator. He is the protector. He is the destroyer. He is the saviour of everybody. You are therefore the best of all sages desiring to see the Lord." said Vyasa to Narada.

"Blessed am I," replied Narada. "I want to save the world by preaching Sastras, Dharmas, and devotion," he added. After some pause Narada continued :

"By the by, I would like to tell you one important news I got from the saint. The Almighty lord, master of Illusion, the ever blissful left Vykuntha. He is now at Swami Pushkarini along with Lakshmi."

The sages who heard this were surprised. They wanted to go to the Lord wherever he might be. They left by air immediately for Swami Pushkarini. They had a holy dip in

its waters and sipped some water of it and went to the western side of the lake. They saw the Lord who appeared like Mount Meru, shining as million suns. They then went to the southern side of the Pushkarini, where Asuras, Danavas, Rakshasas and meat-eaters were engaged in penance. They were amazed. They then went to the eastern side. There they saw Lord Srinivasa being extolled by Siddhas, Rishis, Apsaras etc. Indra was singing the praise of the Lord thus : "Lord of the Universe, save me. I prostrate before you. Lord, grant me the vision of your form, which the Yogis even are not able to see. How can my life be blessed, Lord ? Saviour of those in calamities, you are the sole refuge of all creatures. You are the bestower of salvation to Gods also. Save me, save me, I salute you again and again."

With Indra were seated other Gods, praying to the Almighty. Agastya and the sages were surprised on seeing them. They went to the northern side of the Pushkarini, where they found the natives of the Seven Islands, kings, sages, and brahmins versed in Vedas, and humanbeings and ascetics. Some of whom were dancing, and some singing. Every one shed tears of joy. "Vishnu is one. Yet, he manifests himself in many ways. He is the moon during the nights, Sun during the day. He is the creator of all". So saying all were engaged in offering flowers, incense, sandal paste, and sacred waters and waiving lights before the Almighty near the Swami Pushkarini. Some were shouting "Lord, Hari, Murari, Purushottama". Some were sitting silently, while some were meditating. Some were laughing. Some were carrying vessels with water.

Yet some were carrying flowers and scents to worship the Lord of Vrishabhadri. Thus, Gods, saints and human beings also were seen near the Pushkarini. Then there was a

heavy downpour of flowers on the sacred hill. The sound of celestial drums was heard. At that moment Lord Vishnu manifested himself near Swami Pushkarini. Glittering like pure gold, adorned with gems, brilliant as million suns, cold as one million moons, the Lord descended in the Vimana on the earth from Heaven. Father of all fathers, and Gods, mother of all children, the greatest of the great, the saviour of all, the vessel that conveys human beings to their destination, the greatest of the great, the saviour of all, the vessel that conveys human beings to their destination, the treasure of the poor, manifested himself like 'fire'.

The Lord of Vrishabhadri, along with Sri Lakshmi, with his lustrous body and smiling face was there !

"So, worship this Lord, Srinivasa, Jagadguru, the ever blissful, the sustainer in this world, the bestower of salvation in the other world," advised Bhishma to Yudhisthira.

Even the worst sinner is redeemed of all his sins by merely remembering the Lord. The entire family of one who serves the Lord is undoubtedly liberated. All the sacred kshetras, teerthas, and shrines, look to Lord Srinivasa.

23. The Seven Sacred Hills

The area representing the hood of Sesha is known as Venkatadri. It is called by several other names also. Great sages, Brahma, Rudra and many others bathe in the lake on the hill and perform penance. Since Sesha had assumed the shape of a mountain, any tree, creeper or blade of grass on the hill is a Yogi, born as such. Brahma, Rudra, Gods, sages, Yakshas, and all celestial beings and Rishis offer worship to the Almighty day and night with great zeal and devotion on this sacred hill.

Seshachala

Once upon a time, Lord Vishnu was reclining in his private chambers in the ocean of milk. Goddess Lakshmi was by his side. Sesha, the serpent couch took up his position at the main entrance of the Lord's palace. However, he was indulging in self-glorification. At that moment, Vayu arrived, and sought an interview with the Lord. He tried to force his entry into the Lord's apartment. "This is not the appropriate time for you to enter the private apartment of the Lord, Vayu. You cannot have the interview now." So saying, Sesha refused permission to Vayu. "You are exceeding your limits." Vayu warned Sesha. He reminded Sesha of the fate of Jaya and Vijaya. "Day and night, I am very close to the Lord. You are after all a servant. You cannot claim equality with me. You cannot see the Lord now. Sit at the gate" shouted Sesha. Vayu laughed and said :

"A cat may always stay in a house. Can it be said to be equal to an elephant outside the house? Servants may claim to be called friends. Yet, are they entitled to seats? Perhaps you do not know Sesha, that I am the life of the living!"

He continued to assert saying : "either in strength, knowledge, or asceticism there is no votary of my calibre. I am authorised to be near Lord Vishnu on account of his grace on me. Please do not argue further", retorted Sesha. "Let us then put our strength to test. What is the use of your prattling?" added he. While the wrangle was proceeding, the Lord came out and enquired what the matter was. Turning to Vayu he observed : "Vayu, you are the life of the Universe. You are greater than me also!" Turning to Sesha he remarked : you hold the entire Universe, Sesha. You too seem to be eminent." Sesha then threw a challenge. "Lord, Please test our abilities and courage. This is a great mountain, you know, held by me. I shall fasten it with my body. If Vayu can blow this mountain off I shall concede my defeat" he said.

The Almighty could gauge the pride of Sesha. "Very well, proceed" he said. Sesha came to the earth and found the hill Venkatachala. He fastened the hill with his body and held it tight. He got furious. "If you have the strength, Vayu, uproot this hill now" he challenged once again. Vayu touched the feet of the hill and tried to shake it with his fingers. The hill did not move. Vayu tried with his hands, but to no effect. He was upset. It touched his pride. He then attempted utilising all his strength. The universe shook. Brahma and other Gods rushed to Vayu. At their instance Sesha became a bit light slackening his hoods. Vayu did not keep quiet. He exhibited his strength. In a moment the hill moved. It flew with great velocity and finally dropped on the bank of the river Suvarnamukhi. Meru, father of Sesha, was perturbed. He prayed to Vayu saying "Oh" life of the universe, save us, save us, save my

son. Pardon his mistakes." Vayu was pleased. He promised to save Sesha. He caught hold of the hill and along with it flew and dropped on the earth. With his shrunken body Sesha also dropped on the earth. Lord Srihari came to the rescue of Sesha and installed him on the banks of River Suvarnamukhi. The Gods instructed Vayu suitably. Sesha realised his folly, and begged Vayu's pardon. The hill is since then called Seshachala.

Sesha, having been cut to size, stayed at the Nagateertha near Swami Pushkarini. He performed severe penance for a pretty long time to recover his lost seat near the Lord. Sri Hari revealed himself before Sesha and ascertained his ambition.

"If you are pleased with my penance, Lord" asked Sesha, "Dwell on my body forever, just as you did in the ocean of Milk." The Lord said that "when on a previous occasion I asked Narada to indicate a suitable place on the earth for me to stay the sage suggested Venkatadri. I wanted to go there."

Vayu's prayer :

Vayu practised rigorous austerities and made great penance for one thousand years on Vrishibhadri. Lord Vishnu manifested himself before Vayu. Vayu prostrated before the Lord. He felt immensely glad, paid obeisance to the Lord and sang his praise thus :

"O, Lord Purushottama, the beginningless, Sreedhara. Anantlia, Jishnu, reverence to you. In the beginning you were the only being, Purusha and were accompanied by Maya illusion. The entire universe was then an ocean. From your navel was born Brahma. He created the universe, animate and inanimate as ordered by you. Associated with Rajoguna, you had

created the Jagat. Associated with Satvaguna You protect every thing. You destroy it associated with Tamas.

The Prajapathis were born from you. From them were born all Devas, human beings and demons. When Brahma was in trouble, you killed the demons, Madhu and Kytabha. Assuming the body of a fish, you killed the demon Somaka, and recovered the Vedas and handed them to Brahma.

When the whole universe was without support, you became a tortoise and recovered it and held it in safety.

When the earth, the mountains and forests on it sunk to the lowest of the nether regions, Pāṭhala, you became a great white boar and rescued the earth.

When in the beginning of the kritayuga, the demon Hirany akasapa troubled your devotees, you sprang up from a pillar as Naaasinha, Man lion, and killed the demon and saved Prahlada, his son and your devotee.

When Bali defeated Indra, and Indra sought refuge in you, you came down as the dwarf, Vamana and begged Bali to donate three feet of land to you and with that land you occupied all the worlds and presented them to Indra.

When it was necessary to put down the kshatriyas who were behaving as demons, you were born as Bhargava Rama. You offered the blood of the kshatriyas as oblation to your deceased father and effaced the race of the kshatriyas. You performed horse sacrifice and handed over the whole earth to sage Kasyapa and retreated to the ocean, where you raised a building and resorted to penance on Sahyadri.

When in the Treatayuga, Ravana was a menace to Gods, you incarnated as Rama, son of Dasaratha and accompa-

nied by Lakshmana, your brother, killed Ravana, who abducted your consort and recovered her.

You were Balabhadra, Rama, Krishna and Vasudeva. You are the eternal Supreme Being. You are Vishnu among Adityas. You are Sun among the self-illuminating. You are Pavaka among the Vasus, Sambhu among Rudras, Mercury (Budha) among planets, Indra among Gods, Kapila among Siddhas, and Narada among the celestial sages. You are the Japa Yagna, among all Yagnas, Tapas among Tapaswis, Kubera among Yakshas, and Yama, the Self-control, the first of the means of attaining yoga. You are the crocodile among the fish, Ganga among the rivers, Sagara among lakes, the vital air among all airs, the four-faced among Brahmas, Brahminism among castes, Grihasthasrama among the four orders of religious life.

You are the moon among the stars, mind among the senses, lion among the beasts, elephant among the four legged, brahmin among the two legged, Garuda among all the birds. Vasuki among serpents, Kalakoota among all poisons, Anantha among Nagas; Meru among mountains and Himachala among the principal mountain ranges.

You are the Sama among the Vedas, Gayatri among Chandasads, Pranava among the Mantras, Kamadheenu among the animals, Fire among those who consume offerings in sacrifices, mountain among all immovebles peepal among the trees, Skanda among the chiefs of Armies, forbearance in the brave, sprout among the seeds, life in the living, Vasishtha among the brahmans, Pavana among the moving, Bhrigu among Maharshis. Vyasa among those who are experts in Vedas, Valmiki among poets and king among human beings.

Whichever thing, powerful or brilliant, exists in all the three worlds, you are that. Those learned in Vedas know this. O thousand headed Purusha, salutations to you. O thousand armed, thousand legged, obeisance to you."

The Lord was pleased with Vayu's prayer.

Narayanachala :

Once a brahmin, named Narayana, meditated on the Lord of Venkatachala near Swami Pushkarini. Concentrating on the tip of his nose, he made severe penance for a long time. Due to his Tapas peace prevailed on the hill. Trees bore fruits in all seasons. The strong never caused even the slightest pain to the weak. Pleased with Narayana's penance, Lord Sri Hari descended before him. Narayana prostrated himself before the Lord, got up and paid obeisance to the Lord going round him again and again for a while he could not know what to do. Recovering himself he offered invocation to the Lord thus :

"O Lord of the universe, save me. Extend your grace on me. You are the creator, protector and destroyer of the universe. Prakrithi and Purusha create everything by your grace. There is none equal to you in the universe and none greater than you. You are the knowledge, the knowable, the way to knowledge and the fruit of knowledge. You are the father of the universe. Lakshmi your consort is its mother. Even Yogis such as Sanaka and Sananda, Brahma and Gods cannot know you after they make great penance also. You are not known by the study of Vedas or by Yagnas, penances or donations. Devotion is the only way to know your real form. I am blessed today by your vision. The life of one who does not see you is a waste."

The Lord was delighted. He asked Narayana to indicate the purpose of his penance. He promised to grant anything the votary desired.

"In order to have a vision of you, Lord, I have traversed the entire world. I could not see you.

Brahma directed me to go over here and do penance. Madhava, be pleased to reside on this hill along with Lakshmi. Let this hill be a famous one named after me," prayed Narayana.

"Be it so," said the Lord. "Whoever it may be, if on bathes in the Swami Pushkarini and worships me here, he shall live happily and in the end reach Heaven. One who has a holy dip in the waters of the Pushakrini will be released from Hell and go to the realm of Brahma. The sacred lake undoubtedly grants liberation, livelihood and what not. The hill shall be called hereafter Narayanachala" added the Lord. Narayana was blessed with merger with the Almighty in the end. Since then, the Lord has been residing on the top of Venkatachala and the hill is called Narayanachala.

Garudachala :

As Garuda, the celebrated vehicle of Sri Vishnu transported to the earth the Lord's sporting hill Kreedadri, the hill is famous as Garudari also. When Garuda wanted to take Vrishabhachala back to Vishnuloka, the Lord directed him to stay on the hill till the end of the Kalpa. Hence also the name Garudachala. Since the Lord took up residence on Narayanadri, Bhairava, assisted by his attendants, dogs, Pramadas, and Army, guards the hill. Holding always a human skeleton and other weapons he stays ever attentive on the hill.

Anjanachala – Birth of Anjeneya :

In the Tretayuga there lived an Asura named Kesari. He had no children. He made great penance to obtain the blessings of Lord Siva and beget a son. Reciting the Panchakshari, fasting, and controlling his senses, he inflicted privation on himself and carried on penance. Pleased with the penance, Lord Siva manifested before Kesari and enquired about his desire. "I want a son, one who will be strong, brave, learned, capable and unconquerable in any war" said Kesari. "I do not want to grant a son to you although I am pleased with your penance. Nevertheless, I will grant you a daughter, a lovely one, who will beget a charming son with all the qualities enumerated by you" said Lord Siva to Kesari. In course of time Kesari had a daughter whom he named Anjana. When the girl attained age, Kesari gave her in marriage to another Kesari, a leader of Kapis. Kapi-Kesari could assume any form he desired.

For long, Anjana too had no children. She was sorry and so sought the blessings of brahmins. She observed all religious vows and practices. Even then her desire was not fulfilled. One day Dharmadevatha, the goddess of right eousness, assumed the guise of a sooth sayer and met Anjana. She had a stick in her hand and carried a baby in her arms. She walked in the street shouting "I can reveal anyone's future". Anjana invited her, presented to her precious gifts. "Tell me the truth. What about my prospects of begetting a son?" She asked. "If your prediction comes true I shall present to you whatever you want." She announced. The sooth sayer assured that Anjana would surely beget a son, if only she performed penance again on Venkatadri for seven thousand years. Sage Matanga also advised Anjana to do penance. Accordingly,

Anjana carried on tapas on Venkatachala. She lived on air and meditated on Vayu, the Airtgod. Pleased with Anjana's penance, Vayu used to present a fruit daily to her. Seven thousand years elapsed. Lord Siva and Parvathi descended at the hermitage of Anjana and spent some time there. Once the Lord saw a monkey pair engaged in love. He drew the attention of Parvathi to the amorous scene.

"We shall also enjoy thus, assuming the bodies of monkeys," expressed Parvathi. The divine couple converted themselves as monkey couple. Vayu carried Siva's vital fluid in some leaves and dropped it in Anjana's hands. Anjana took it to be a fruit dropped by Vayu as usual and consumed it. She conceived. But she was worried as to how she came to be in the family way while in penance. She felt ashamed and wept. Soon a heavenly voice declared thus :

"Do not be worried, my daughter. In order to kill Ravana, a demon who is a menace to the world, Sri Hari will be incarnating as Sri Rama in the family of Raghus at the request of Gods. You will beget a son, who will be a hero, celibate, with all divine qualities and unlimited strength. He will assist Sri Rama."

Anjana delivered a male child in course of time. By birth the child had precious ornaments to his ears. He had a dazzling sacred thread. He was shining like gold. He had a tail and a loin cloth. He was very lovely. The moment he was born he cried for food. He saw the rising sun. Mistaking him to a fruit he dashed up in the sky to devour him. The entire universe cried in horror. Brahma came in haste and released the weapon, Brahmasira on the child. The child fell down, struck by the

one use Brahmastra against a child just born ? Don't you have children ?" she shouted. "What a calamity had befallen on me!" she wept. The Gods consoled her. They knew the purpose of the child's birth. "Don't worry, Anjana, we shall grant a rare and powerful boon to your son. He cannot be killed by any God, demon or human being. No weapon can injure him. He will be a very powerful hero. No enemy can do him any harm" they assured.

"This hill shall be called Anjanachala" declared Brahma "You have done severe penance, and begot this child for the welfare of the three worlds" he added. The Gods returned to their regions. Anjana returned to her hermitage with her son. From then onwards the hill is called Anjanachala. It is located east of Narayanachala.

Goddess Gowri, consort of Siva did severe penance near Anjanachala when she was insulted by her father, Daksha. She pleased her Lord and succeeded in her efforts.

Vrishachala :

"Father, tell me, which is the best Vishnava Kshetra where I may do penance without any hindrance ?" asked Skanda his father, Lord Siva, one day.

"There is a holy hill by name Vrishachala worshipped by Vrisha. You better go there and do penance" said Siva. Skanda desired to know why Vrisha did penance on that hill. Sankara narrated the concerned legend to his son, thus :

"In the conflict between Vayu and Sesha, Seshachala was blown to the earth. It settled down at the present holy place

where all teerthas are located. You may make penance on the southern side of the hill. It is a beautiful place full of trees. There are many sages and Siddhas engaged in penance there. Chandalas and those averse to Vedas cannot climb it."

Suka, some other sages and devotees like Prahlada and Ambarisha considered the hill as the Almighty's body. They did not therefore attempt to set their foot on it. They bathed in the waters flowing down the hill and did penance to have vision of the Almighty, Janarhana. Thus the hill is most sacred. A look at its peak absolves one from all sins instantaneously. There dwells Lord Varaha being worshipped by sages thrice daily. The holy place is therefore called Varahakshetra. Whoever chants the sacred Varaha Mantra with devotion, at the holy Varahakshetra on Venkatachala for one month continuously, following the procedure laid down in scriptures gets all his desires fulfilled. Whoever donates the sixteen kinds of donation shall be pleasing Goddess Earth. Lord Adi Varaha grants vast kingdom to them. The kingdom of a ruler who ignores Lord Varaha and Dharani, his consort, will be subject to calamities and invasions by enemies and diseases.

Hence, it is necessary for every king to worship Varaha with devotion and heed. On the sacred hill there is the holy lake Swami Pushkarini. All the teerthas from the three worlds congregate at the Pushkarini every year to get purified. When Vyvaswathamanu ruled over the world, Dharma performed penance on the hill. Pleased with it, Lord Sri Varaha revealed himself along with Bhoodevi before Dharma and said :

"Dharma, on account of your penance this hill shall be called Vrishachala, as Vrisha (Dharma) has prospered here. You will rule over the world after Yama". Dharma then returned to

his native land. The hill became popular as "Vrishachala" since then.

Vayu did penance chanting Tarakamantra and offered worship to the Lord. He was keen on having a vision of the Almighty.

Vrishabhachala

In olden days there was a demon called Vrishabhasura. He indulged in persecuting the sages who did penance on Seshachala. Consequently the sages were not able to carry on their penance. They prayed to Lord Srinivasa to come to their rescue.

The demon worshipped a Narasimha Salagrama and offered his head to the deity every day. Each time a head was cut and offered a new one sprang up in its place. Five thousand years elapsed. The Lord manifested before the demon. Vrishabha prostrated before the Lord. When asked by Sri Hari to spell out his desire he said: "Lord, I want an encounter with you. Grant me this boon." The Lord granted it and retreated.

One day Lord (Venkateswara) Srinivasa went on horseback for hunting on Venkatachala. The leader of the hill tribes living there received him and offered him many presents. Guided by him the Lord was engaged in hunting wild beasts, Vrishabhasura saw Srinivasa and wondered who that charming young man could be. He challenged Srinivasa. A fierce battle was fought between Srinivasa and the demon. Discarding his weapons, the demon gave a fight to Srinivasa. The Lord directed Vishwak-sena 'the chief of his army' to finish off the demon. Vishwak-sena assisted by Gandharwas fought with the demon. The demon could know that he was about to be routed, So he

released his magical powers. In an instant thousands of demons, with arms cropped up. But the Lord's powers were unlimited. The demon felt diffident and demonstrated his illusory powers and disappeared.

Soon the Lord released his discus to the battle field. From the discus shot up fierce fire which destroyed the forest. Vrishabhasura and his army could not stand the fire. The demon then understood who his enemy was. Better counsels prevailed. Vrishabhasura prostrated before the Lord and sang his praise thus :-

“O Lord of Lords, Lord of the Universe, the root cause of everything, I bow before you and seek your refuge. Lord, you are the entire creation. There is nothing except you in all the three worlds. All Gods work under your directions. Wind blows by your command only. The Sun shines and the fire burns under your orders. The God of Death is afraid of you. Lord, save me. Sages seek your protection in many ways. Yet, you are not easily seen by them also. Such an Almighty Lord, you are now before me. Pardon me and my evil deeds. I do not want to live any longer this life.”

Vrishabha concluded his prayer beseeching Srinivasa to name after him the hill, where he lived, Srinivasa smiled and said. “By devotion to me you will get liberated. Your wish shall be fulfilled.” The Lord's discus separated the head of Vrishabhasura from his body. Celestial beings showered flowers on the Lord. The benevolent Lord returned to Seshadri. The hill where Vrishabhasura was killed is since called Vrishabha-chala. It is one of the seven hills of Venkatachala range.

25. Suvarnamukhi, the sacred River

Dakshayani, the daughter of Daksha, and consort of Lord Siva was once insulted by her father. She immolated herself and was born as the daughter of Himawan. At the instance of the seven great Maharshis Himawan offered her to Lord Siva. Sambhu accepted the offer and proceeded with his party to marry Dakshayani. To felicitate the bride-groom on the eve of his wedding the entire world of spirits marched to Oshadhee Prastha, the abode of Himawan.

Unable to bear the weight of the spirits, the northern part of the earth sunk to the lower region. The southern area rose in level. All were terrified at the unusual phenomenon. Lord Siva then requested Agastya, the great sage, to maintain the natural level of the earth.

"You were born out of my energy to save the world. So, my dear son, Agastya, level up the earth and make it even. None expect you can do this. Many invitees will be arriving to witness my wedding. You need not worry about your attendance at my wedding. You will see it wherever you may be" said Lord Siva. Agastya crossed the Vindhya mountains and proceeded to the south. The earth became even. The sage continued his southward journey and came across another lofty mountain with numerous glittering gems and powerful herbs. He climbed it slowly. On the northern part of the hill he saw a lake and built a hermitage near it. He resided there for some time along with some other ascetics. The hill is called 'Agastya sila' from that time onwards.

Once when Agastya was worshipping Lord Siva he heard a heavenly voice thus :-

"This part of the country has no river. It is like a brahmin without knowledge and wisdom. It is as a night without moonlight. For the good of the people here create a river. You will be rid of your sins also," Agastya finished his puja and thought over the voice he heard. He sent for other sages in the Ashram and told them about it. All the other sages impressed on him the need for a water source in the area. Agastya made great penance and carried it on without minding any obstacle. The entire world shivered. Unable to bear the intensity of the penance Gods approached Brahma for protection. The four-headed Lord rushed to Agastya and asked him to speak out his ambition.

"This country is without a river. My heart melts at the plight of the people. My Lord, be pleased to bless the country with a big river" prayed Agastya. Brahma, then thought of the holy river Ganga. In a moment the celestial river manifested herself before him with folded hands. Brahma instructed her to provide the land with water as desired by Agastya. Ganga then created a river with celestial splendour. "This is the river sprung from a part of mine. It will fulfil your desires" she declared.

Agastya directed the new river to follow the course to be marked by him. The river obeyed. Indra, other Gods and angels showered flowers on the sage. The natives of the area exclaimed : "the waters of this river are like nectar."

"This river, brought by Agastya, is like gold to this land. So, it shall be called Suvarnamukhi. It deserves to be worshipped" praised Vayu. Agastya's joy knew no bounds. The river runs through thick forests and lofty mountains. Its waters

cure the sick, and feed the happy. It is a precious and beautiful ornament to the region. Born on Agastya hill, brought by the great sage to the earth it touches several sacred places and finally joins the south sea, her husband. Bones of dead animals buried in the river are steps leading to heaven. Those who partake of any food grown with the waters of Suvarnamukhi, or those who drink of its waters will not be affected by sins. Any person who bathes in this river once atleast, following the prescribed rituals, earns the merit of ten million dips in the holy river Ganga. As Govinda among the Gods, Moon among the stars, Himalaya among the mountains, so is Suvarnamukhi among the rivers.

One who recites the following sloka after having a dip in the Suvarnamukhi gets purified :

“Agastyachala sambhootam Dakshinodadhi gamincem
Samasta Papa hanthreem twam Suvarna mukhareem srayem Maha-
pataka viplushtam Catram mama tavodakyh Kshalayami Jaga-
ddhatri sreyaasa yo jayasuumam.”

A holy dip in the sacred Suvarnamukhi on festive occasions is specially meritorious. Donation of land of the size of a cow's foot even confers merit equal to gift of the entire earth. Similarly donation of cows. Meditation, penance or sacrifice, or worshipping Gods or the souls of the deceased parents made on the banks of river Suvarnamukhi would endow a hundred fold merit. If on the day Agastya star rises on the east every year one performs a holy religious performance on the banks of the river after a dip in it and donates a golden icon of Agastya, he acquires a permanent place in the realm of Brahma. The icon may be according to the capacity of the donor.

The first and foremost of the water sources of Suvarnamukhi is Agastya teertha. A dip in it eradicates all sins Gifts

of land and gold made here acquire great merit. At this spot Agastya consecrated Lord Siva called Agastyesa. If any one after bathing in the sacred river worships this Linga, he acquires the merit of ten horse sacrifices.

The day when the Sun enters the constellation of Capricorn is very auspicious. By bathing in the river on that day and worshipping Agastyeswara, one earns great merit. About two miles north-east of this teertha, there are other teerthas where Gods, Rishis and souls deceased fore fathers are worshipped. By bathing in these teerthas and offering oblations, one gets redeemed of his debt to the Gods and fore-fathers and reaches heaven.

About two yojanas away to the north, the river Vena joins the Suvarnamukhi. A holy dip at the confluence of these two rivers confers great merit. Suvarnamukhi with Vena flows amidst mountains and takes a northern turn. After some distance it turns to the east near Agastyaeswara linga. Then it flows to the sea. On the way one more river, Vyaghrapada joins it. On the banks of Vyaghrapada and near Sankha teertha Lord Sankhesa was consecrated by sage Sankha. Merging with Vyaghrapada the other two rivers wend their way to Vrishabhadri. Another river, Kalya born on Vrishabhachala, meets Suvarnamukhi. A bath at the confluence of these two confers supreme merit. Venkatachala is about four miles north of this confluence.

Creation exists by the grace of the Almighty, Lord Narayana. The Lord is present in every thing. He is the sacrifice (Yagna), its doer, its instrument and also its fruit. He is the final end and the one who grants that also. He is the saviour of all. He is Hari, Sadasiva, Brahma, Mahendra and Parama. These terms relate to him only. He is ever-lasting, ever blissful and formless. He has no attributes. Sacred of the most

sacred he is the refuge of those who have no refuge. He is the God of Gods, the source of everything, the base for all, the one without beginning or end. He is independent. Yet he depends on his devotees. He is omniscient. Sages seek him.

Sankarshana, Vasudeva, Pradyumna and Aniruddha are his four attributes. Meditation on all these, with appropriate Pranava, amounts to the recitation of the holy 'Vasudeva mantra' daily.

Brahma is the Rajasic part of the Almighty. From the Almighty's mouth were born Indra and Agni. From his navel was born Brahma seated in a lotus. From his mind were born the moon, the stars, herbs, medicines and waters. From his eye the Sun, from his life the intermediate region between the Heavens and Earth, and from his head the sky were born. Earth was born from his feet. From his face the brahmins, from his arms the kshatriyas, from his thighs the Vysyas and from his feet the Sudras were born. From his mere volition all the animate and inanimate beings were born and creation emanated. Assuming the form of a sub marine fire he consumes the waters of the oceans. At the end of each Kalpa he erases the creation and resumes it himself. Retaining the whole creation in his belly he sleeps on a banyan tree like a child at the end of a Kalpa. He sleeps in Yoga on the Sesha serpent. He is the Lord Supreme. In his sportive mood he does everything.

Whenever righteousness declines and unrighteousness prevails, whenever Gods afflicted by great distress pray to him, whenever human beings are struck with fear, whenever his sincere votaries and Sadhus are in great peril, he descends in the appropriate form and destroys the wicked and unrighteous and extends necessary help to the deserving.

In the Rajasic state, as Brahma, the Lord creates. He protects as Hari, in the Salvic state, the highest of the three ingredients of nature. Assuming the Tamasic state of Hara he destroys the created. Who can know the greatness of Srihari ?

26. AHOBILAM

By the side of the hermitage of Vyaghrapada is located the sacred shrine of Lord Narasimha, the bestower of all Siddhisi, i.e superhuman powers of faculties. It is famous as Ahobila Kshetra.

To kill the domon Hiranyakasyapa and bless the demon's son, Prahlada, Lord Narasimha revealed himself there along with Rudra and Brahma. All creatures achieve immortality by visiting Lord Narasimha and paying reverence to him. One who visits this shrine once even, gets redeemed of all his sins and reaches the realm of Vishnu in the end.

27. Sacred Teerthas on Sri Venkatachala

Teerthas are places of water sources considered holy. There are thousands of sacred teerthas on the holy hill Venkatachala and its surroundings. Of all these Pushkarini, Akasa, Ganga Papavinasana, Pandu, Kumaradhara, Thumbu and Krishna are the most sacred.

On the full moon day in the month of Kumbha all the teerthas congregate in Kumaradhara. A dip in this teertha on that day confers great merit.

Feeding or giving alms to the deserving poor on certain days at the teerthas is meritorious. When the Sun is in the constellation of Pisces, all teerthas assemble at Thumbu teertha in the noon. One who bathes there at that time will have no re-birth.

On a full moon day a dip in Akasa Ganga is highly beneficial. On the twelfth day in the bright fortnight of Dhanur masa (December-January) all teerthas meet in Swami Pushkarini waters. A bath in that teertha that day enables one to get liberation.

Those who listen to the stories of Sri Hari always, become great devotees. Those who cannot listen always may listen as long as possible. Those who listen with devotion and attention get greater merit. In the Kali age listening to Puranas and reciting the names of Vishnu are the best paths leading to salvation.

One who knows Puranas has to be respected irrespective of his age or status. Seated on a Vyasasana, the Puranic's seat, the expounder of Puranas should preach the Puranas. The place for preaching Puranas should be a suitable one, preferably a

temple or the bank of a holy river. Listeners should pay rādīt attention to the teachers and their teachings. Those who merely hear without devotion derive no benefit at all. The listeners should first worship the Purana and offer betels and gifts to the preacher and then listen to him. Cursed are those who listen to Puranas chewing betel leaves and who listen seated on proscribed seats. Those who blame Purnas are also dammed.

Those who talk illogically about Puranas, and those who never listen to Puranas get undesirable future births. Those who disturb discourses on Puranas are also doomed. Those who support puranas and those who donate blankets or seats to those who expound Purnas are rewarded well. Sinners, who listen to Puranas are also redeemed of their sins. They attain the highest goal.

Sixty eight teerthas on Sri Venkatachala and its surroundings are regarded important. A recital of their names liquidates all sins of the person who recites- Some of the more important teerthas in addition to Swami Pushkarini are :

- 1) Chakra, 2) Vajra 3) Vishwaksena 4) Panchayudha 5) Hala-
yantha 6) Narasimha 7) Kasyapa 8) Manmadha 9) Brahma
- 10) Agni 11) Gowtama 12) Dyva 13) Viswamitra 14) Bhar-
gava 15) Astavakra 16) Durarohana 17) Bhyrava 18) Maha
- 19) Pandava 20) Vayu 21) Asthi 22) Markandeya 23) Jabali
- 24) Valakhilya 25) Jwarahara 26) Vishahara 27) Lakshmi
- 28) Rishi 29) Sathananda 30) Vybandhika 31) Bilwa 32) Vishnu
- 33) Sarabha 34) Brahma 35) Indra 36) Bhardwaja 37) Ambara
ganga 38) Prachetasa 39) Papavinasa 40) Sarasvata 41) Kumara
- dharika 42) Gaja 43) Rishyasringa 44) Tumbu 45) Ashtha-
deva 46) Dasavatara 47) Helayuva 48) Saptarshi 49) Gaja-
karna 50) and Gajakara. Once, the thousand sons of Daksha
did severe tapas at the teerthas on Venkatachala. Advised by
Narada they excavated one hundred and eight more teerthas.

Those who have a holy dip in Swami Pushkarini, Viyad-ganga, Papanasana, Pandu, Kurma, Thumbu and Krishna teerthas attain the supreme state. Bathing in any teertha when the Sun is in capricorn, on a full moon day is most propitious. On Sundays River Ganga and other rivers congregate at a dip in Pandu teertha on that day confers great merit.

Swami Pushkarini, the most sacred

The most holy lake, Swami Pushkarini, consisting of fragrant and sacred waters was brought by Garuda from Vykuntha to Venkatachala. Its waters are most holy as all the sacred teerthas are in it. It is free from all pollutions. It eradicates sins which accrue by theft or drink. By bathing in Swami Pushkarini daily, one gets his material desires fulfilled. One's desires would be realised if he sees, touches, or even remembers Swami Pushkarini. The supremacy of Pushkarini is beyond description. According to one's devotion will be his achievements.

Three things are difficult for a human being to achieve. They are :

- i) A dip in the Swami Pushkarini,
- ii) Serving the feet of a good preceptor, and
- iii) Observing Ekadasi, the eleventh day of the fortnight with the rituals.

Birth as a human being is itself a great achievement. Still more are living on the sacred Venkatachala and bathing in Swami Pushkarini. A visit to the holy lake confers merits attainable by accomplishment of all rituals. All routine or special rituals performed near Swami Pushkarini confer extra-ordinary merit.

Physical deformities of human beings are also set right by observing religious rites near the holy Pushkarini. In short, there is no recourse except Venkatadri to cure the ills of humanity.

On Sri Venkatachala long long ago King Dastratha prayed to the Almighty, Sri Hari, and obtained a boon that the Almighty himself would be born as his son.

Brahma practised austerities and did penance near Swami Pushkarini. Pleased with the penance Srihari appeared before him. He enquired Brahma what his desire was. Sages were also present.

'Bhagawan' said Brahma, "If you are so pleased with me, kindly stay on here giving darshan to one and all. Your vision will benefit every one. In Kaliyuga, people are after food and sex. They do not know what is righteous and what is not. All human beings are like beasts. They do not know you. As a result they go to hell in the end. Lord, stay here for the sake of humanity, bless and serve them."

The Lord was glad to hear the prayer of Brahma and said "I shall stay here till the end of the Kalpa with my consorts Sreedevi, Bhodevi and Neela and all my attendants Sesha, Garuda and Vishwakshena.

"Who ever does penance here shall achieve results easily. Similarly Yagnas, Karmas and Yagas performed here yield quick results."

Swami teertha shall be the most sacred teertha. All other teerthas, even the Ganges, sprang out of it. All the lakes of Mykuntha praise Swami Pushkarini. A dip in it destroys multitudes of sins. Any one bathing in the teertha with a

"Lame, deaf, dumb, any one with any defect or deformity, even a leper, if with a keen desire to have my vision comes to me, he will get all his desires fulfilled. Here after human beings can move about on earth without any fear." Thus the Lord assured Brahma.

Bhagawan then entrusted Sudarsana, his discus with an assignment saying:- "Sudarsana, along with Kumuda, the elephant and equipping yourself with all weapons, rush to the place where the wicked Dytyas are creating horrors and teasing the brahmins. Wherever they may be, you go there and wipe out the wicked, assure safety to the people and return."

Sudarsana proceeded at once as directed by the Lord, carried out the Lord's instructions and returned in a moment. He reported his achievements to Srihari. The Lord then assured fearlessness to all. Brahma obtained the Lord's approval for the ahmotsava and conducted it.

The glory of Swami Pushkarini was sung by sages Atri, Asa, Vasishtha, Parasara, Gowthama, Bharadwaja, Manu, Yama, Jnavaalkya, Haruta, Angira, Markandeya, Agastya, Durvasa, Swamitra, Sakti, Suka, Sanaka, Narada, Kundina, Vasudeva and several others,

The merit accumulated by those who bathe in the Pushkarini was eulogised by some sages. Some others declared that those who utter the name of "Swami Pushkarini" get freed of their sins, however heinous they may be.

"Any one, on getting up from his bed, early in the morning, utters the name "Swami Pushkarini" would attain the supreme realm. Any one who drinks three-mouthfuls of the waters of the Pushkarini would get his sins of the previous day wiped out" announced one sage.

Residence near the Pushkarini also was applauded. Needless to say that any good deed done near the Swami Pushkarini grants immense merit. Sage Jabali said that a dip in any waters remembering Swami Pushkarini confers great merit.

Sage Vamadeva added "One who sings the praise of the Swami Pushkarini early every morning reaches the highest region." All the sages were loud in praising the holy lake. They felt happy and stayed on its banks offering worship to Lord Srinivasa.

"Free distribution of food is the best charity that could be done near Swami Pushkarini" said Sathananda. One who feeds the residents there shall be free from all diseases. One who gives in charity land, cows, gold, clothes, maidens or even Sesamum seeds (Tila) reaches the best regions in the end. He stays there till the end of the kalpa. There he attains devotion to Hari. Finally he reaches Vishnu's land.

Who ever gives food in charity, without hope of any reward, on the banks of Swami Pushkarini attains the highest state of devotion to Lord Hari and reaches his region. Those who bathe in the Pushkarini and drinks of its waters get relieved of all sins and reach Vishnuloka in the end.

Whoever gives there in charity gold, or clothes or cows according to his capacity achieves long life and health and after enjoying all his desires attains the supreme state in the end.

Long ago Brahma described the glory of Venkatachala and Swami Pushkarini to Sage Vamadeva who in his turn narrated it to Sathananda.

Once upon a time Vamadeva did severe penance for several years to propitiate Lord Brahma. The four faced Lord

seated in a lotus revealed himself before Vamadevo and said :
“I am very much pleased with your penance. I am here to grant anything you want.”

Vamadeva requested Brahma to enlighten him about the glory of Swami Pushkarini. Brahma then narrated : “On the banks of the sacred Swami, Pushkarini, the Moon, born of the milk ocean donated golden jewels and obtained beauty and charm, cupid presented maidens and achieved love and passion. Kubera became the Lord of riches after donating gold at Swami Pushkarini. Indra gave away sixteen kinds of gifts and vanquished his enemies.

A certain brahmin who imparted knowledge to many on Venkatachala attained supreme knowledge. Every act of charity made on Venkatadri earns great merit and ensures higher worlds to the donor.

On the northern side of Venkatachala there is a hill called Salivahan which cures diseases and relieves all sorrows of mankind.

Swami Teertha is a holy and famous one conferring great merit. On its banks dwells the Almighty, the Lord of the Universe. Any one, who, on getting up from his bed in the morning recites the name ‘Swami Pushkarini’ attains the supreme state. A look at the lake and a dip in it eradicate all sins and woes of the bather. One who drinks of its waters goes to Swarga on a celestial plane. The sick become healthy, and the bereaved get relieved of their grief, if only they drink of the Pushkarini’s sacred waters. Sri Vishnu himself declared that the Pushkarini was equal to all teerthas and Ganga.

Just as Vedas are the most sacred of all Sastras, so also Hari is the supreme God. Of all the tcerthas Swami Pushkarini is the most holy. Advised by Satananda, Janaka bathed in the holy waters of the Pushkarini. He offered worship to Lord Venkateswara and returned to Mithila and ruled over his kingdom righteously."

28. Markandeya visits Swami Pushkarini

Sage Markandeya made penance on the banks of the holy River GANGA- Pleased with his tapas, Brahma manifested himself before the sage and asked him to spell out his desire and promised to grant it. "Grant me the strength to undertake pilgrimage to all the holy places in the three worlds" requested Markandeya. Brahma smiled and said : "It is not possible even for me or Lord Sambhu to bathe in all the sacred teerthas within a few hundred years. However, I shall tell you an alternative" he continued.

"About two hundred yojanas south from here there is a very holy hill, named Sri Venkatachala. On its peak is the sacred Swami Pushkarini. Early in the morning on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Margasira (Dec) all the holy teerthas, millions of them, congregate there to rid themselves of their sins. So you also go to Swami Pushkarini. You will get the benefit of bathing in all teerthas. Further, whatever merit is acquired by pilgrimage to Ganga and other sacred rivers and holy places such as Kailasa or giving charity to brahmins is achieved by pilgrimage to Swami Pushkarini. Whoever offer charity to brahmins and votaries of Sri Hari and the poor, or donates any of the sixteen donations prescribed by scriptures on the above said day with devotion, achieves the merit of dona-

One who bathes in Swami Pushkarini chanting the following Mantra also achieves the above merit. "DHANURMASE SITE PAKSHE DWADASYAM ARUNODAYE AAYANTI SARVA TERTHANI SVAMI PUSHKARINI JALE"
Saying so Brahma departed.

Markandeya went to Swami Pushkarini, had a holy dip in its pure waters and worshipped Sri Janardana on its banks for three years. By the grace of Srihari he attained eternal bliss. Those who bathe in the teertha on the above day and prostrate before the Lord are redeemed of all their sins and attain their permanent abode in the realm of the Lord.

29. Goddess Saraswathi and Swami Pushkarini

Once, Goddess Saraswathi desired to be declared as the best of all teerthas. She converted herself to River Saraswathi in Brahmavarttha. Bhagawan Pulastya went to the river for penance. Saraswathi treated him as her father and did service to him. However, Pulastya who knew the supremacy of River Ganga was outraged and cursed Saraswathi.

“Your desire will never be fulfilled, You will be a river only for ever. By virtue of her birth from the Lord's feet Ganga will be superior to you” he said. Saraswathi retaliated. “Pulastya, your descendants will become demons,” she said. Pulastya repented for his hasty utterance. Saraswathi then said: “The last descendant of yours will be Vibheeshana, a votary of Vishnu till the end of the Kalpa.” She continued her penance in order to achieve her desire. Finally the Lord revealed himself before her and instructed thus: “Go to Seshagiri. Swami Pushkarini is there. All the teerthas existing in the three worlds pray to me for redemption of their sins. In order to relieve them of their sins they will bathe in you. On the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of the month when the Sun is in Saggitarius, all the other teerthas come to you. They serve and crown you as their head.” So blessing the Lord resided near the Pushkarini.

Vakulamalika, the foster mother of Lord Srinivasa, prepared used to food for him and his consorts. She later became

the owner of the land covered by the teertha. Saraswathi a sholy waters and Vakula Malika dwelt there.

Other Teerthas near Swami Pushkarini

There are nine other teerthas near Swami Pushkarini. e.g., Dhanada and Galava. If any one bathes in them on one and the same day and pays obeisance to Lord Srinivasa, recites the one thousand names of the Lord, he acquires great merit. If one does not either bathe in all the nine teerthas or fails to have the darshan of Sri Varaha, he achievee nothing. Lord Srinivasa will not be satisfied by such a person.

One should also listen to the holy stories of the teerthas also in order to acquire merit. Otherwise the pilgrimage is a waste.

30. Miraculous powers of Swami Pushkarini, The story of Dharmagupta

Once upon a time Nanda, a descendant of Soma dynasty was an emperor. When he grew old he handed over the empire to his son, Dharmagupta and retreated to forest for penance. Dharmagupta also ruled over his empire efficiently and righteously. Every citizen did his duties loyally and was happy.

One day, Dharmagupta went for hunting on horseback. He entered a dense forest. It was evening. He offered his prayers to Gayatri and took shelter on a tree. A bear came to the tree being chased by a lion. It also climbed the tree and saw the king.

"Do not be afraid. You can spend the night here safely. There is a wicked lion under this tree. You better sleep half the night. I shall take care of you. The other half I shall sleep and you will protect me," said the bear. The king agreed and slept.

The lion heard this and asked the bear to leave the king to him.

"O Lion" said the bear. "You know ethics. Treachery leads to hell. There is no sin worse than betrayal of another. The sin of one who betrays is never redeemed. I shall not commit it. The lion kept quiet. The bear slept on the tree.

The lion then asked the king to leave the bear to him and sleep comfortably. After a while the king threw down the sleeping bear. The bear however, fell down unhurt. It woke up and narrated about its previous life.

"I am Dhyana-koshta who voluntarily took this body of a bear, O king. You have thrown me down the tree when I was asleep. So you will be a lunatic hereafter and wander aimlessly" it cursed the king.

Turning to the lion it said "you are not a lion. You were a great yaksha, a friend of Kubera." The bear narrated the previous life story of the lion also.

Once, Bhadranaama, a Yaksha was sportng with his wives near the hermitage of Gowtama, the great sage in the Himalayas. He was not aware that the sage was near by. A little later, Gowthama came there to collect firewood. He saw the Yaksha, who was naked, and cursed him to become a lion atonce. Bhadranaama become a lion. However, Gowtama, took pity on him and told that he would become a Yaksha again when Dhanya Kashta met him.

The bear could know all that took place in the past. The lion turned out to be the Yaksha as the curse ended.

Bhadranaama thanked Dhanyakoshta and returned to Alakapuri on a celestial plane. Knowing the fate of Dharmagupta, his minsters reported the matter to his father. The king took his lunatic son to the hermitage of Jaimini, and requested the sage to cure his son's lunacy. Jaimini advised the king to take his son to Swami Pushkarini for a holy dip which, would cure the boy. The king did accordingly. As soon as the boy had a holy bath in the sacred waters of the Pushkarini he was no

more a lunatic. The king and his son offered worship to Sri Venkateswara. The king continued his penance. Dharinagupta donated liberally to Lord Venkateswara and brahmins and returned to his capital to rule over his kingdom.

Lunatics and those passing through unfavourable periods, or those suffering from the malignant influence of planets get relief by a bath in Swami Pushkarini. Those who repeat the name "Swami Teertha" thrice, wherever they happen to bathe, reach the realm of Brahma.

31. The story of Sumati

In Maharashtra state there was once a pious brahmin named Yagnadeva. He was an expert in Vedas. He had a son named Sumati. Due to bad company Sumati led an immoral life. He left his parents and wife. He went to Utkal county where he continued to indulge in his immoral activities.

A hill tribe woman, Yuvamohini, attracted him and ultimately made him a pauper. Sumati resorted to thefts and other illegal activities to maintain his paramour. He ate in Yuvamohini's house and never thought for a moment about his parents or wife.

Several years thus elapsed. One night Sumati armed himself with a sword and dressed himself as a hunter, entered a brahmin's house to steal. He killed the owner of the house, stole his money and returned to his concubine. Brahma Hatya, the sin of having killed a brahmin, dressed in black robes, roaring loudly and shaking the earth and heaven, pursued him. Running from place to place Sumati came to his own village atlast. He sought shelter in his own house. Brahmahatya, in the form of a demon, also entered the same house. Sumati prayed to his father to save him. Yagna deva tried to save his son. But Brahmahatya shouted "O brahmin, this sinner does not deserve any sympathy. There is no sin which he has not committed so far. If you do not leave this sinner to me I shall eat your wife and every member of your family. For the sake of one member the whole family should not be destroyed."

Yagnadeva pleaded that affection to his son was preventing him from discarding a sinner also. Brahmahatya advised that it was not good to love a bad son. "It is a sin even to look at such a son" so saying Brahmahatya struck a blow on Sumati. Shouting "Father, father" Sumati fell on the ground. His mother and wife began to weep."

Meanwhile sage Durvasa happened to come there by chance. He is an incarnation of Rudra.

Yagnadeva saluted him. He prayed to the sage to advise him a way out so that his son could be free from the sins.

"I have this only son, and none else. O sage, if he dies, there is none to offer pindas to me. Be kind to us" he beseeched.

"Yagnadeva," said Durvasa, "Your son has committed most heinous crimes. Yet there is a way to be rid of them. I advise you to take him to Swami Pushkarini for a bath and cure."

Yagnadeva did accordingly. A divine voice was heard saying "Yagnadeva, your son is now free from all sins."

By the waters of Swami Pushkarini worst sinners also are purified.

32. King Sankhana regains his kingdom

There was a king named Sankhana who ruled a vast country, long long ago. On account of his past evil deeds, all his feudatory princes revolted against him and usurped his kingdom, wife, children and ministers. He reached Ramaswaram, where he had a dip in the holy sea. He then arrived on the northern bank of River Suvarnamukhi, bathed in its sacred waters and proceeded to Padmasarovara. He had a bath in it and stayed nearby. Brooding over his misfortunes, one day, he fell asleep, when a heavenly voice was heard by him thus : "Do not be sorry, O king. North of this place there is a sacred hill called Sri Venkatachala. On it dwells the Almighty, the merciful, the bestower of boons to his votaries. Near his shrine there is a holy lake called Swami Pushkarini. To its west you will find an ant hill. Get up. Go there and construct a small hut there. Reside in it. Bathe in the Swami Pushkarini thrice a day. Contemplate on Lord Venkateswara. Worship him for six months with unflinching devotion. You will then surely regain your lost kingdom "

Sankhana went up the sacred hill, which was covered by lovely trees and inhabited by charming birds and animals. He spotted out the lake. The lake Swami Pushkarini was full of pure, crystal clear waters. For six months the king did as ordained by the heavenly voice

Then one day from the midst of the Pushkarini arose a brilliant Vimana. In it was seated Lord Vishnu holding a conch, discus and mace in three of his hands. His consorts, Sreedevi and Bhodevi, were on either of his sides. Brahma, Siddhas, Vidyadharas and Kinneras were offering him worship. Great sages were singing his praise. Celestial music was flowing. Sankhana was very glad. He sang invocations seeking the Lord's protection.

"Extremely lucky I am by your vision. Save me, Lord, save me. The kingdom you gave me was lost by my ill-luck" he said. "Save me, O Lord" he appealed. "I do not know any ceremonies, rituals or rules. I am however blessed by your vision" he added.

The Lord then announced: "Do not be worried, O king, you will regain your lost kingdom. One who bathes in the holy waters of of Swami Pushkarini will surely get back everything he lost. Return to your capital. You will be king again."

The gods were astonished. "Swami Pushkarini is a marvellous one. It confers even sovereignty!" they exclaimed and returned to their places.

Sankhana returned to his country. By the time he reached it, his enemies who occupied his kingdom fought among themselves, each challenging the other. As a result they all perished. The people had no ruler. They were in search of their old king, Sankhana. They saw Sankhana near the River Godavari. "Your kingdom is awaiting you. Please return and rule over it" they requested him.

Sankhana was crowned as king again. By the grace of Sri Venkateswara he ruled over his kingdom well for long, without fear of any foe.

33. The story of Kasyapa

Pareekshit, son of Abhimanyu and grandson of Arjuna was an ideal king of Hastinapura. Once he went to forest for hunting. While searching for an animal he hit with his arrow, he felt thirsty and hungry. On his way he saw Sameeka, a sage, sitting in deep meditation and questioned him whether he had seen any animal running that way. The sage was not mindful of the queries. There was no answer from him. Pareekshit got annoyed as he had no answer from the sage. He placed a dead snake around the neck of the sage and returned to his capital angrily.

Sringi, son of the sage, was informed by his friends that his father was having a dead snake on his shoulders. He grew wild and cursed that "the fellow who placed the dead snake around his father's neck would die within seven nights being bitten by Takshaka, a serpent.

Sameeka learnt about his son's rash action and said "The king is the protector of all in the country. Why did you curse him, my son? A country without a king falls in chaos. Anger begets sin and kindness begets happiness. People who have patience achieve success." He instructed Gowramukha, one of his disciples to go to Pareekshit and request him on his behalf to come to him so that the curse could be withdrawn.

Gowramukha went to the king and conveyed the message. Pareekshit was shocked. In order to save himself from the curse, he took shelter in a building specially erected for the purpose, in

in the midst of water. Doctors were sent for. Sages, Saints. Rishis and devotees were invited. Kasyapa, a mantrik of high reputation was prepared to save the king. He was a poor brahmin and thought that he could enrich himself overnight by saving the king's life. Meanwhile, Takshaka also was on his way to the king. Kasyapa and Takshaka met on the way. Kasyapa revealed to Takshaka the purpose of his journey.

"I am Takshaka, O brahmin, none can cure a man bitten by me" said Takshaka. He, however, wanted to test the powers of Kasyapa. By his venomous bite he converted a tree nearby into ashes instantaneously. Kasyapa, by his miraculous Mantrik powers, made the tree bloom again. Takshaka wondered about the powers of Kasyapa and said :

"O brahmin, please see that the curse of a sage does not fail. I shall pay you double the amount which the king offers to me." Takshaka presented precious gems to Kasyapa. Kasyapa would, however, know by his inner sight that Pareekshit was fated to die soon. He received the presents from Takshaka and coolly returned to his Ashram. Takshaka directed all his efforts to kill Pareekshit :-

"All of you, serpents, go to the king as sages. Present the fruits to him." The serpents did so. Into one of the fruits Takshaka entered as an insect. The king accepted the fruits presented to him by the sages. He was particularly interested in the big fruit. He took it. The sun was setting. The Rishis spoke to one another. "Let not a Rishi's words turn out to be false!" So saying, they all departed. Pareekshit accepted the fruit containing the insect also. From it rushed out Takshaka, and an instant Pareekshit was engulfed by the fire that issued out from Takshaka. He ran everywhere, but could not

get a place to stay anywhere. At last he approached sage Sakalya. He could not know why he was being persecuted and asked Sakalya to enlighten him.

"I have not committed any sin, theft or murder. I do not drink liquor. I do not understand what sin I had committed" he deplored. Sakalya told him that he deliberately failed to save the king. "You were capable, of saving the king. One who, though capable, does not cure out of greed or lust any person suffering from poison or diseases, is a murderer of brahmins".

There is redemption from any other sin but not from such a one as the above. One who commits such sin has to be expelled. None should speak or eat with such a sinner. Parikshit was a noble king, charitably disposed. He was a votary of Vishnu, the protector of all. He was listening to the stories of Hari narrated by Vyasa's son. A doctor who does not care to attend to a patient has to be condemned" elucidated Sakalya.

Kasyapa then prayed to Sakalya that a way out should be revealed to him. He wept and asked "Be kind enough towards me and tell me how I would be well received by my friends and relatives."

Sakalya meditated for a while and said: "Proceed to Venkatachala, the holy hill. There is the sacred Swami Pushkarini there. To its south is the shrine of Srinivasa. Go there, bathe in the holy waters of the Pushkarini. Worship Sri Varaha, swami following the rituals. Visit Lord Srinivasa. On having the darshan of that Lord you will be rid of your sin."

Kasyapa proceeded at once to Venkatachala and did as instructed by Sakalya. He got relief. All his friends and rela-

tions received and respected him affectionately. Those who have a holy dip in the sacred Swami Pushkarini or sing its glory or recite its story and glory never go to hell or any other lower regions. They will be saved from all kinds of suffering after death.

Those who steal the property, wives or children of others suffer in the hell called Tamisra for several years. Those who hate their parents go to hell. Those who violate the path prescribed by Vedas and resort to evil ways, fall into hell called Asipatravana. Those who take food without performing the five Yagnas go to the hell where they eat insects. Those who steal the wealth of Vipras or any one in any manner, even if they be kings will be burnt in a hell of fire and will be tortured there by the servants of Yama. Similarly those committing various kinds of sins suffer in different hells for different periods according to the gravity of their sin.

By bathing in the waters of Swami Pushkarini all the sins are washed away. By a simple dip in the Pushkarini, one achieves the merit of Aswamedha. (horse sacrifice) He will get the knowledge of self and also liberation. He gets the merit that accrues by donating one thousand cows. All his desires will be achieved. The worst sinner also gets redemption, wealth, fame, knowledge, purity of mind by worshipping the Swami Pushkarini. Any one who doubts and argues for argument sake, about the above said efficacy of Swami Pushkarini goes to hell.

Swami teertha is a wish yielding tree, Kalpavriksha, which gives the votary all the needs in this life and liberation at the end.

Blessed is he who bathes in Swami Pushkarini. One who praises or eulogises or touches or salutes the waters of the Pushkarini will not be reborn.

34. Sarvabaddha becomes Sarvasiddha

Once upon a time Vasishtha and some brahmins met Brahma. At that time other sages such as Sanaka and Sanandana, rivers like Ganga and all teerthas were present before Brahma. Vedas, and Sastras were also in the Assembly hall. Vasishtha prostrated before Brahma and said :

"My Lord, I have come to pay my reverence to you." After enquiring his welfare, Brahma asked Vasishtha whether he had any purpose in his visit. Vasishtha said : "Lord, salutations to you. Every one speaks very high of me, saying Vasishtha, Vasishtha. But all this is causing me great embarrassment and worry. I am well known as the king's priest. Priesthood is a heap of sins. Whatever sins the king commits, they are all attributed to the priest. Several sins are not redeemed by remedial rituals. I am always worried about them. Not only that. In a certain village, there is one Sarvabaddha who is devoted to me. He is an atheist, and evil doer. He indulges in committing sins always. He is a poor brahmin, fallen in evil ways. He attends all Yagnas and sits among the twice born to earn money.

Once, some other brahmins saw him among the brahmins and questioned him : "Sarvabaddha, why are you here among the twice born ?

You are sitting like Vasishtha who does not bathe or follow principles of purity." Sarvabaddha heard this and was

pained. "I am compared with Vasishtha by angry brahminas. That Vasishtha will save me and purify me" he thought.

Thus, Sarvabaddha always thinks of me and talks always : "Vasishtha, Vasishtha". Although I do not commit sins, yet sins pursue me. Kindly tell me how I can get out of these sins." Brahma, then narrated the remedial measures. But Vrishista explained :

"Lord, my sins are huge and grave. These remedial measures suggested by you would be ineffective. That is why I have come to you. I salute you, Lord. Be pleased to advise me correctly as to how I will be redeemed of the multitudes of sins".

Brahma thought for a while and said : "In the country far south of Varanasi, there is a hill called Venkatadri, famous all over the world. If a man utters the name 'SRI VENKATA' he is purified. Gods also salute such a person. There are millions of teerthas on Venkatachala, all capable of redeeming all sins. Of all these, Swami Teertha is the best and holiest. On its southern bank resides Lord Vishnu along with Lakshmi. Worshipped by Agastya and other sages he bestows boons. On Venkatachala is a sacred teertha called Ghona teertha. When the Sun enters Pisces, on a full moon day, if one bathes in this sacred water source, all his sins are washed away.

You and your followers, go there and bathe in that teertha on the holy occasion, You will be rid of all your sins."

Vasishtha thanked Brahma for the advice. He came to Sarvabaddha. Accompanied by his disciples and Sarvabaddha, he went to Suvarnamukhi and later to Kapilateertha and from there to Swami Pushkarini. He bathed in all these. He paid

reverence to Sri Bhoovaraha, Lord Lakshmiapati and offered prayers to Sri Venkateswara, thus - "On your hill, Lord, the holy Ghona teertha is located. We have come to have holy bath in it. Kindly bless that we may have the benefit of the holy dip."

The party then went to Papavinasa teertha on an Ekadasi day and fasted for five nights. All the Rishis there were astonished on seeing Vasishtha. Vasishtha also had a holy dip in the teertha and went into deep meditation. Later he offered prayers to Sreehari and went into samadhi. All the sages sat nearby.

Then Lord Venkateswara with Sreedevi manifested before Vasishtha. Along with him were Sanaka, Sanandana.

"Vasishtha, you have come over here on the advice of Brahma. I am pleased with you. Spell out your desire" asked the Lord. Vasishtha expressed his gratitude to the Lord and said: "Almighty Lord, this brahmin, though my friend, committed many sinful acts. Initiated by me he has bathed in this teertha. Kindly purify him." The Bhagavan condescended to wipe out all the sins of Sarvabaddha. "Even though this liar does not possess even a single good quality, he has come over here with devotion at your instance. By association good or bad accrues. Hereafter he will be Sarvasidha. I shall enter into his mind and make him as a virtuous person. I shall make him wealthy and happy also," the Lord added. Turning to Vasishtha he said :

"Vasishtha, all the sins accumulated by you as a priest are written off. Even a worst sinner gets redemption by a bath in this teertha on an auspicious day."

The Lord described the efficacy of a dip in Ghona teertha thus :

“Those who bathe in this teertha on the full moon day in the month of Meena every year are blessed. By having holy bath in this teertha, unmarried girls get ideal husbands. Married womens, husbands live long. They beget sons who will be assets to their families. Barren women beget children. Men become rich. Those who seek fame attain it. Students become learned. All those who bathe in this teertha reach the realm of Vishnu after living on earth happily for long. Those who bathe in the teertha and donate anything to brahmins receive my compassion. Cows, clothes, vidya etc. , should be donated here. The donors get well rewarded. Feeding brahmins here confers merit.

In Kali age this teertha will become a famous one. Supply of water to way fares also is propitious and earns merit. Whatever those who bathe in the teertha desire shall be fulfilled. Drawing the attention of all pilgrims, Lord Venkatesa loudly announced :

“All your sins will be erased. I shall grant all your desires. All of you will achieve what yogis even cannot secure. To be born as a human being in Bharat is very difficult. Pilgrimage to Venkatadri is still more difficult. It cannot be had except by the merit accrued in previous lives. Bathing in Thumbu teertha on this auspicious day and donating confer very great merit.”

All those present saluted Srihari. They left happily

Vasishtha followed by Sarva Siddha returned to his hermitage. After some time Sarvasiddha returned to his native place as advised by Vasishtha. He carried on his sacred rituals and lived a happy life. Every one congratulated him on his achievement.

“By the grace of Vasishtha there is no one equal to you” they observed. Sarvasiddha remembered Sri Venkateswara always. Thumbu teertha burns away all sins. It is most holy on the full moon day of the month of Pisces.

35. Skanda's request to his father

SKANDA, son of Lord Siva killed Tarakasura, a brahman, in the war between the gods and demons. The sin of having killed a brahmin pursued him. Skanda felt very hungry also after the strenuous war. He met his father and requested him to indicate the water source, teertha, where he could eat after having a dip in it. Maheswara advised his son that by reciting the holy name 'NARAYANA', once, and bathing in the sacred Ganga and all teerthas, one would be purified.

Skanda requested his father to enlighten him further as to where and how Narayana could be seen on earth : "Tell me, father, where do gods offer worship to Narayana?" he asked.

Sankara then narrated his personal experience thus : "Sometime ago, when I severed the head of Daksha from his body, in the sacrifice he conducted, the head remained stuck up in my hand on account of the sin, which I acquired by killing Daksha, a brahmin. which that head in my hand I went to Heaven also begging every one. I could not get redemption from the sin. Then I did severe penance near the lake of Brahma on Mount Meru. Brahma, who happened to be there to have a dip in the waters asked me why I was there. I replied "Father, what am I to do? What can I say? I am unable to be free from the sin I had earned by killing a brahmin". I entreated Brahma to tell me a way out. He consoled me and described his own case bearing on the subject, thus :

"Long ago, at the sacred confluence of Ganga and Yamuna, the sacred Kshetra of Madhava, a holy Yajna was conducted by me. Madhava, the benevolent, who loves his votaries, immensely, manifested himself. I prostrated myself before him and sought his protection. The Lord was pleased with me and promised to be present at the Kshetra so long as it existed. He assured that any sinner, man or woman, visiting the Kshetra would be cleansed of all his sins. Ever since, Madhava has been at Prayag, the holy Kshetra. I was also assured of redemption from my sins. Then I went to Prayag. The moment I entered it my sin left me. The head of Daksha dropped down from my hand. My mind became peaceful. I bathed in the holy river, saluted Madhava with folded hands and begged him to grant me this Kshetra. Lord Janardana agreed and instructed me to do penance there and left."

Skanda then asked his father: "which is the best Vyshnava Kshetra on earth where I could do Tapas without hindrance?" Sankara looked at his consort Uma and told his son.

"My dear son, there is a hill called Vrishachala where Vishnu did tapas. You also do penance there".

Skanda wanted to know more about Vrishachala. He asked Sambhu. to tell him more about the hill. "Who is that Vrisha? What for did he do penance? Kindly enlighten me further" he asked his father.

Lord Sankara then narrated all about the seven hills. "Even great votaries like Prahlada were afraid of ascending the hill on foot. A sight of the peak of the hill liquidates every one's sins. There resides Sri Mahavishnu as Sri Varaha, the Great Boar. Who ever, following the code of conduct, recites

the great Varaha Mantra, for one month, living a restrained life, obtains prosperity and gets his desires fulfilled soon. Rulers should make it a point to offer worship to Lord Varaha. invariably. Vrisha, a Manu did tapas there long ago. Vayu also did penance there" concluded Siva.

Skanda then requested his father to initiate him into the Vyshnava Mantra. Lord Siva then imparted the sacred Mantra to his son. After initiation, Skanda felt elated. He circumambulated his parents saluted them and left for tapas. The Devas headed by Indra followed him. They also went to Venkatachala, where Skanda wanted to do penance. Skanda could not have peace of mind. Brihaspati consoled him and questioned: "Skanda, why don't you recollect that you are the permanent abode of Vishnu?" Skanada wondered.

"Who am I? I do not know the self in me," Shanmukha questioned Brihaspathi. Brihaspathi then narrated the previous legend leading to the birth of Skanda thus:

"Dakshayani, daughter of Daksha, immolated herself when she was insulted by her father, who did not extend invitation to Lord Siva for the Yagna he conducted. Siva learnt about the immolation of Dakshayani and vowed that he would not accept any one except Dakshayani, Sati, as his wife. He did severe penance, standing naked, holding his hands up, and controlling his breath. In those days, a demon called Taraka did penance to obtain favours from Brahma. When Brahma revealed himself before the demon, Taraka wanted a boon that he should be killed by none except the son of Lord Siva. Brahma granted the boon.

After some time, Sati was born as the daughter of Himavan, the king of mountains. She wanted to marry Lord Siva. The Gods prayed to Lord Siva to beget a son who could kill Taraka. Indra requisitioned the services of Cupid and instructed him to use his good offices and see that Lord Siva falls in love with the daughter of Himavan. Kamadev went to Siva and tried his wit. Sambhu was engeraged and opened his third eye. Kamadev was reduced to ashes by the fire which shot up from Sambhu's third eye. Later on, Sambhu married Uma, daughter of Himavan, and brought back Cupid to life. Lord Sambhu and Uma spent one hundred years in pleasures. Indra and some gods approached Sambhu and prayed to him requesting him to see that the demon Taraka was killed soon. Lord Sambhu got angry and released his powers. The earth trembled and represented to Marutas, saying: "I am being burnt to ashes. Save me". The gods took pity on her. They requested Agni to bear the great power released by Lord Siva. Agni came to the rescue. Parvathi was pleased and requested Agni to become her son as he bore the Power released by Siva.

"Just as you had become the power released by Siva, now you will be also the protector of all beings in the wombs. You have borne the great energy of Lord Siva. You will be the son of all who worship you" blessed the gods. Uma cursed the Maruts that they would be childless in future. She cursed Prithvi thus: "You will not have the affection of your children. You have not borne my son. So you will be one of the many wives of your husband."

Later on she cooled down and met Sankara and from there proceeded to Bhrigu Prasravana hill for tapas. The gods got worried and asked Brahma: "What is to be done, Lord?"

Brahma assured that whatever the goddess said would surely take place.

"However" said Brahma. "I shall give you a piece of advise now. Please go to Ganga and request her to bear Siva's energy in her womb." The gods followed the advise and prayed to Ganga. Parvathi and Ganga bore the great energy and left it at the Ashram of Uma, O Kumara, you were born there" said Brihaspati.

"The gods were happy. They entrusted you to the care of Six Goddesses, who fed you with their breast milk" concluded Brihaspati. After narrating the birth of Skanda he sang the praise of the Divine child thus : "Such was your wonderful birth, O Kumara, son of Sankara. You are Vishnu. You are Brahma. You are Rudra, Kumara, the destroyer of Taraka. You are Sikhi, Subrahmanya and Skanda. You hold Sakti in your hand. Lord, you were born of fire and Ganga. O six faced, two armed, beloved son of Parvathi, Hero, commander-in-chief of all armies, O Twelve armed!

You shine like millions of Suns. I prostrate myself before you. O Kumara, charming child. Rider of peacock, Grant me a son. Bless me with immortality. I seek refuge in you" prayed Brihaspati.

Skanda was pleased with the prayer of Brihaspati. He granted the two requests of the great sage and added : "Those who sing my praise, which you sang now, three times a day, shall please me. They shall be conferred with progeny and prosperity. They shall have no fear of untimely death. Kings also respect such people."

Subrahmanya then retreated to Vrishabhachala. He dug out a lake for his bath. The lake had beautiful flowers to be used for worship of the deities. Skanda had a dip in the lake and saw Vayu nearby, engaged in penance. He meditated on the Almighty, Sri Narayana. On account of his tapas, his body became as bright as gold.

36. Sankara and Parvathi go to Skanda

One day Siva told Parvathi :

“All sages are going to the hill where Skanda is doing penance. Gods, human beings, Siddhas, Sadhyas, Garudas, Pannags and Rishis also are performing tapas on the sacred hill. Some meditate on me, some on Brahma and some on Skanda while some others on Indra. We shall also go there. The Supreme Being will manifest himself on the sacred Venkatachala. Chakra, the discus of Lord Vishnu obtaining the permission of his master is going to do severe tapas there in order to have my vision. He will dwell at Chakra teertha.”

Parvathi was astonished on hearing that Sudarsana, the discus, who is always in the hands of Lord Vishnu, would be doing penance to have a vision of Sankara and wanted elucidation.

Sankara clarified thus :

“Sudarsana, the wonderful discus of Lord Vishnu is Vishnu himself, O Parvathi. No one except Vishnu can handle it. Once the city of Varanasi was burnt to ashes by Sudarsana. Lord Janardana, later on, wanted to grant me a boon. He asked me to state my desire as he was pleased with me. I said : “Let the discus which destroyed my city be in my possession. Nothing else I want, Lord.” Madhusudana smiled and caught hold of

“How can effulgence, Prabha leave the Sun and live separately ? These celestial weapons, Kowstubha, Chakra, Sangna, and also Sree and Garuda are perpetual semi-divine beings having supernatural faculties. They have neither birth nor death. They dont serve another master. It is impossible to comply with your request. I shall not, any way, speak a lie. Some how, your desire shall be fulfilled.

Owing to a certain reason, however, my discus will remain near you for one thousand celestial years, when the occasion arises. Afterwards, it will return to me.”

Thus, O Parvati, the Chakra happened to be with me to protect the Devas and destroy their enemies. It did penance to reach me” said Siva. Parvathi was then curious to know the legends about the Chakra and Vajra teerthas. Sankara narrated them thus :

“There are seventeen hermitages south of Vrishadri. Chakra Teertha is one of them. In days of yore, Vasishtha, Atri and some other sages were offering worship to Lord Sree Ranganatha at Srirangam. One day a Gandharva, called Sundara, accompanied by one hundred Gandharva ladies, came to the river nearby. They were all bathing in the river withnaked bodies.

In order to offer their mid-day prayers, Vasishtha and the other sages also came to the same river. The Gandharva women were afraid on seeing the sages. They put on their clothes hurriedly. Vashistha got wild and cursed Sundara to become a demon. The women prayed to Vasishtha to forgive their husband “O, great sage, pardon this single fault of Sundara. We cannot live without him” they urged. Vasishtha cooled down and assured the women that Sundara would, after sixteen years, go to a

lake called Chakra Teertha on Venkatachala and attempt to eat sage Padmanabha, when the discus of Vishnu would cut his head to save that sage. "You will then regain your original body, when the period of curse ends," said Vasishtha to Sundara and returned to his hermitage.

The women began to weep as Sundara was transformed as a demon with a fearful body. Afraid to see him they left. Sundara became a Bhyrava and ate every one he came across. He wandered everywhere and finally arrived at Venkatadri. As the sixteen years period expired he happened to go to the lake and tried to devour sage Padmanabha. As the enraged sage prayed to Sri Hari, the Lord's discus rushed and separated the demon's head from his body.

Sundara then recovered his celestial body and sang the praise of Sudarsana the discus. Blessed by the divine discus and taking leave of the sages, he returned to his land.

Sage Padmanabha requested the discus to stay there for some time so that the water source might be named after him and the sages could live there free from fear. The water source was from then onwards called Chakra teertha. Sudarsana assured Padmanabha saying "those who bathe in this Teertha would prosper in every way."

37. Vajra Teertha

Sankara described the origin of Vajra teertha thus :—

Indra once fell in love with sage Gowtama's wife. Gowthama cursed Indra that he would have in his body one thousand female sex organs. Indra felt ashamed on his body's ugly transformation.

He ran to Brahma's lake and hid himself in the tube of a lotus. His kingdom was consequently without a ruler. The Gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas and Charanas went to Amaravathi, the capital of Indra to see him. As Indra was away they were unable to see him. They enquired his wife, Sachi, about the whereabouts of Indra. Sachi replied :—

“One night, we were together. He left without my knowledge, somewhere. I do not know where he is now. Brihasati, the preacher of Suras should be able to know.” All the visitors and Sachidevi then went to Brihaspati and prostrated themselves before him. They prayed to him to tell them the whereabouts of Indra.

Brihaspati found out by his yogic insight and said “He did an undesirable deed and is suffering its fruits. Ashamed to see any one, he is hiding in a lotus tube in Mount Meru.” He asked all others to accompany him to Mount Meru, saying : “Let all go and see him”. All went to the lake where Indra was hiding and requested him to come out. With his loathsome body Indra came out. Lowering his head in shame, he caught hold of the feet of Brihaspati and confessed :

"I tried to disturb the penance of the great sage, Gowthama, as I wanted to help Adityas. I am now suffering the result". Brihaspati smiled and observed : "This is the fruit of your own act. You have to suffer". To the others he said :

"You all pray that Indra should recover his original body." The Devas prayed accordingly. Indra regained his original body with more vigour.

The Apsara ladies then said to one another pointing to Indra. "We can all enjoy with him at a time." Indra was quite happy. He returned to Amaravathi to the accompaniment of music. He indulged in sex day and night with Apsaras. Yet he was not satisfied. Lust increases as fire in a sacrifice ! After some time Indra became weak physically. He prayed that he should recover his normal body. He obtained the permission of Brihaspati and left alone for Vishvaksena lake. He dug a well to get water from Patala for his bath and for worshipping God. He lived on milk diet and controlled his senses and organs. He undertook severe penance and meditated on Gayatri, the mother of Vedas, for one thousand years. Atlast, Sri Hari manifested himself as Varaha, accompanied by Dharani, before Indra and asked him to spell out his desire.

Indra prostrated himself before the Lord and said; "Lord, if you are so pleased with me, grant me one boon. Let me have my normal male body."

Lord Varaha granted the boon and retreated. All the thousand extra organs of Indra dropped down from his body. From them sprang up a thousand brahmins versed in Vedas. "Listen to us, Indra" they said. "We were brahmins doing penance, desiring to enjoy Sachi. Consequently we became male sex organs of your body on account of the tapas of Gowtama. We enjoyed

all that we wanted. We are ready to bless you with a boon. Ask any one" they said.

"If you are so pleased," said Indra : "Let the thousand wounds on my body caused by the dropping of the several organs be thousand eyes". The boon was granted. The brahmins departed. Ever since, Indra had one thousand eyes on his body. He, however, became handsome and returned to Amaravathi, his capital while trumpets blew and music flew from divine instruments. To commemorate the episode, the teertha on Vrishadri was named Vajra teertha.

38. Skanda Redeemed of his sin

In order to be freed from the sin of having killed Tarakasura a brahmin, Skanda was advised by his father Lord Siva, thus :

“Uttering the words ‘Narayana’ once even, human beings acquire the merit of a bath in River Ganga and other Teerthas, several times. I will tell you another powerful remedy, my dear son,” added Lord Siva.

“Near the River Suvarna Mukhi, near Venkatachala there are many teerthas. Of these, Chakra, Swami, Matsya, Pandava, Naga, Bilwa, Jabali, Akasaganga, Papanasa Tumbu, Vamana, and Kumaradhara are the important ones. One who sings always the praise of these teerthas on Venkatachala gets relieved of all his previous sins.

On the banks of Swami Teertha resides Lord Srinivasa always for the welfare of the world. One who remembers him ever, earns his pleasure. Go to Kumara teertha, salute it, have a holy dip in it three times a day. Controlling your senses, recite the mantra : “OM SRI VENKATESAYANAMAHA” and do Tapas” added Siva. Skanda followed the instructions of his father. He bathed in the holy waters of Chakra Teertha and went to Swami Pushkarini.

At a distance of about three kroses and a half was waiting for him Brahmahatya, sin. Skanda paid adorations to Lord Venkateswara, after going round the shrine and sang thus the praise of the Lord :

“Hail to you, Lord Venkatanayaka. Brahma, Rudra and others salute you. O Madhava, relieve me from all undesirable elements and bless me with desirables.”

Then Skanda proceeded to Papavinasa teertha, had a dip in its waters and went to the water falls to the south west from there. There it was all a dense forest with wild beasts roaming freely and hermits engaged in meditation. He bathed in the waters, offered oblations to Gods and was seated facing the east remembering Sri Venkateswara and Lakshmi. He began to chant the Mantra passed on to him by his father. Sometimes depending on fruit diet, other times on water and yet other times remaining without any food he was engaged in penance.

On the noon of Monday, the full moon-day of the month of Kumbha, the Almighty revealed himself before Skanda saying : “O my son, Kumara,” in a loud tone. Skanda opened his eyes and saw the Lord who was holding conch and discus in two of his hands. The Lord’s upper left hand was on his left hip. His right rear arm was pointing to his feet. Goddess Lakshmi and Goddess Bhodevi, beautifully decorated, were seated on the Lord’s chest. Skanda got up and went round the Lord thrice, clock-wise. He then prostrated himself before Him and paid reverence to the Lord thus :

“Hail, O Lord, Lord of the Universe, Lord of Lakshmi, Sri Hari, O Lord of all the worlds, Almighty, eradicator of sins, salutations to you. Salutations.” The celestial drums were sounded. The sound of the conch echoed. Thumburu and Narada playing on their musical instruments came. Lord Brahma arrived. Sambhu accompanied by Goddess Parvathi descended riding on the bull. Vighneswara and other Pramathas followed them. Indra, rulers of the other corners of the Universe, Vala-

khilya, other Rishis, mendicants, Gandharvas, all arrived, hailing Sri Venkateswara and seeking his resuge. All of them prostrated themselves before Sri Venkateswara and his consorts. Vyasa and others also paid their homage. Then every one kept silent.

Skanda then sang the praise of Srinivasa thus : "Salutations to you. Lord Venkatanatha, Vishnu, Narayana, Bhagavan, Murari, Destroyer of devotees" difficulties, Lord. The Sun and the Moon are your eyes. Narayana, salutations to you. Lord of Lords, Srinivasa, Ocean of mercy, destroyer of demons, blessed people only see you, Venkateswara. How blessed am I ! I am able to see you ! O Ocean of mercy" ! so saying Skanda was over-whelmed with joy. "My eyes are blessed by your vision. Venkatesa, bless my ears also with your gospel" cried Skanda.

Sri Hari with a smiling face proclaimed :— "Skanda, you are fully blessed. Sambhu has an ideal son. A good son is born out of the fruit of penance performed by one in several of his previous lives : You are blessed, Skanda Ask for a boon. I am pleased with your prayer and penance. Do Tapas for twelve years. You will attain peace and happiness."

The sin earned by Skanda by killing Taraka left him. Skanda requested Venkateswara to enlighten him as to what should be done later on. The Lord said :—

"Chant my mantra and be happy. Those who visit this hill and bathe in the water springs here would be redeemed of their sins. This lake shall be called : "Kumara Dhara." Those who bathe in this will get rid of their sins certainly. Those who bathe in this lake on the fifteenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Magha, with devotion will be blessed by Gods. Those who bathe in the lake here on the day of my revelation acquire immense merit. Donation here of gold, however small

it may be, acquires great merit. Similarly gifts of clothes, cows land and food will be rewarded with prosperity. Those who supply cooled water to wayfarers will have their progeny blessed by me. Similarly presentation of betel leaves will be rewarded."

A dip in the Kumaradhara on the full moon day in the month of Kumbha, the day of manifestation of Sri Hari, elevates millions of the family of one who bathes there. Every year on the above day all Gods and men congregate at the Dhara for a holy bath. Of all the sacred places Venkatadri is supreme. Of all the teerthas there, Swami Pushkarini is the most holy.

O, son of Sambhu, stay on hear worshipping me till the end of this Kalpa. Saints and sages visit this sacred place annually and offer worship, particularly on the day of my manifestation. So reside here permanently."

So saying Achyutha touched Skanda's head, Then the sages, Gandharvas, and others returned to their abodes eulogising the glory of Kumaradhara, and chanting the holy name of Sri Hari.

39. Vishwaksena

In the Krita Yuga, there was an Apsara lady named Kuntala. Indra instructed her to go to the hermitage of sage Durvasa, the sage with irritable temperment, and disturb his penance. Kuntala went as directed. By her overtures at his Ashram, Durvasa was annoyed. "You will become a huntress" he cursed her. Kuntala was afraid. She prostrated before the sage and begged his pardon. "My word shall never fail," said the sage. "I shall however, reveal to you a way out. After you beget a son you will be back in Swarga," he added. "By your grace let me have a brave son, with longevity. Let him also become a sage" prayed Kuntala. Durvasa said "Be it so".

Kuntala was born as Suvarchala daughter of Veerabahu, a hunter and was given in marriage to Bhadra. Once Varuna, the rain god saw Suvarchala near the River Narmada. Attracted by her beauty, he fell in love with her and said "I am pleased with you. You want any boon ? Ask it." Suvarchala replied "If you really love me, bless me with a good son". Varuna agreed. In course of time Suvarchala gave birth to a charming boy with louts eyes, moonlike face and weapons in his hands. The boy was named Vishwaksena. When the boy was ten years old, Suvarchala died. The orphan was left to the care of sage Kasyapa who taught him Vedas and Sastras.

Vishwaksena, later on, went to Vrishabhachala and did penance for twelve years. He obtained the blessings of Lord Vishnu and was appointed as the commander-in-chief of his forces. He reached Narayanagiri, accompanied by some Gan-

dharvas, and became the leader of all powerful beings, and resided on the south-west part of the mountain peak. In valour, he was equal to Lord Vishnu.

Devajit, Mrityujit and Satrujit were three brothers. They were demons, descendants of Hiranyaksha, and experts in spreading illusion. They obtained a boon from Brahma that no God could kill them. They troubled every one and were a menace to all. Due to their atrocities, the Gods, who enjoyed a share in sacrifices hitherto, lost it. The demons usurped that. Consequently, sages could not carry on penance. Sacrifices had to be given up. The Sun did not shine. Fire did not burn. None could oppose the three demon brothers. Gods had to approach the Lord residing on Narayanachala for protection. The Lord deputed Vishwakṣena to eliminate the demons. Vishwakṣena, accompanied by his mighty forces and powerful chiefs, marched. He attacked the demons, who gave a fierce fight. It looked as though the sky was burning. Then Devajit released his illusory powers against Vishwakṣena. Vishwakṣena's army fell in a swoon. But Kedhavi, a minister of Vishwakṣena, who was also a master of the same craft, neutralised the powers of the demon. Most of the demon's army perished. Mrityujit then put his illusory powers into action. Satrugṇa, from Vishwakṣena's army immediately cut off the ornaments on Mrityujit's head. A fierce battle took place. Kalagni, another minister of Vishwakṣena put into action his illusory powers and destroyed most of the demons' army. The demon fell down struck by the force released by Kalagni.

At last, Vishwakṣena released the Narayana Astra, the most powerful. It rushed to the enemy like the great fire at the time of destruction of the Universe. Oceans trembled and mountains quivered. The Gods and sages witnessing the battle thought that the world was going to end. Finally, Narayanastra reduced to ashes the demons' army and the demons. Every one sang the praise of Vishwakṣena and his army and departed.

40. Atmarama

In the Central region of Bharat, there lived a brahman, named Atmarama. Born in a noble family he was devoted to Gods and brahmans- His father was a great votary of Vishnu and gained mastery in Vedrs. After the death of his father, Atmarama lost all his property. He was worried about his livelihood and went to Venkatadri. He had holy dips in all the teerthas there and sat at a place on the sacred hill reflecting on his past life. Nearby he found sage Sanatkumara engaged in deep meditation. Atmarama prostrated before the saged and sought his blessings..

“Arise, my boy” said the sage. “You are reaping the sowings of your deeds in your previous birth. Why worry now? You had caused hindrance to several good acts. You had never offered a pie in charity. You had never cared for a good deed.

You never thought of Lord Vishnu for a moment even. How do you expect to be happy now? Yet, I shall reveal to you the remedy he added. The sage preached to Atmaram about goddess Vyuhalakshmi, the mother of Vedas, seated in the heart of the Lord. “Go and chant the mantra of Vyuhalakshmi, with a clean body and a pure mind, on Venkatachala, after bathing in the Swami Pushkarini” advised the sage.

Atmarama did as instructed by Sanatkumara and was freed from all his worries. He fell on the ground, and soon got up and saw a dazzling Vimana in a beautiful forest. Celestial beings were worshipping it. Some were singing while others were dancing.

"How is it I am seeing this wonderful thing in a forest?" wondered Atmarama. In the next moment he had a vision of Lord Venkateswara and his consorts. The Lord was charming as a million Cupids. He wore precious ornaments and yellow silk clothes.

"You are my only refuge. O Creator, protector and destroyer of the Universe" Atmarama praised, the Lord and fell on the Lord's feet. Getting up after a while he said: "You know everything, Omnipresent Lord, Omniscient Almighty," and remained silent. Lord Srinivasa, who knows the merits of his votaries consoled Atmarama and instructed him to reflect on Vyuhalakshmi, the Goddess who bestows long life, prosperity, good health and highest knowledge.

Atmarama bowed before the Lord and stood up. But, he did not find any one before him! "Is it my dream or is it real?" he wondered. He got down Venkatadri, and resided near it for long. He spent the rest of his life, very happily, following the divine directions.

41. Ramanuja - Qualities of a true devotee

There lived a great devotee of Sri Hari, called Ramanuja near Akasa Ganga. He was a versatile Pundit and a celibate. He performed very severe penance, not caring for seasons and not taking food or even water, for several years. Sri Venkateswara, riding on his vehicle Garuda, followed by his attendants, accompanied by devotees such as Narada manifested himself before Ramanuja. Goddess Lakshmi was seated in his heart. Sages Sanaka and Sananda were by his side. On beholding the Lord, Ramanuja went into ecstasy and paid obeisance to him thus:—

"O Lord, I salute you. You have neither name nor caste. You are not touched by any evil. You are the redeemer of all sorts of fear. Vedas alone know you. Narayana, Lord of Lords, I prostrate before you, Lord Venkateswara, creator, protector and destroyer of all, I bow before you again and again."

Sri Hari was pleased with the prayer. He hugged Ramanuja with all his four arms and asked him what his desire was.

Ramanuja represented: "Lord Srinivasa, Janardana, Govinda. Blessed I am by your vision. None else is more fortunate. Grant that I may have unflinching devotion to your feet." The Lord said: "Yes. Reside near Akasa Ganga. After you leave your present body, you will attain a body similar to mine."

"One request, Lord" entreated Ramanuja- "Pray, let me know the qualities of a Bhagavata and how to recognise a votary." Bhagavan enumerated them, The following are some of them,

"The qualities of A Bhagavata, a devotee of Bhagavan are many. He is one who is devoid of jealousy, anger, and desires. He desires the good of one and all. He lives in tranquillity. He is a good devotee being a Jnani. A Bhagavata is one who never injures others, either in word, deed or thought. He never accepts anything from others. He engages himself in listening to sacred stories. He has Satwic mind. He is devoted to the feet of the Lord. He serves his parents and worships God. He serves the sages. He never indulges in blaming others. He speaks good which is applicable to all. He sees the entire world as himself. He treats friends and foes alike. He speaks the truth alone. He listens to Puranas. He serves cows and brahmins. He goes on pilgrimage to sacred places. He feels happy at the prosperity of others. He repeats my name always. He constructs temples, gardens, tanks for drinking water and maintains them in good condition. He is devoted to Gayatri always. He is very happy when he hears the name of God recited. He pays obeisance to a garden of basil trees and feels glad when he feels the smell of basil. He follows the prescribed duties of his Ashram. He preaches shastras known to him to others. He has good qualities always. He is fond of feeding, and providing drinking water to others. He observes the eleventh day of both fortnights of the month. He does anything for my sake. He sings my glory. He chants my name always. He is the best devotee of mine. The best of the Bhagavats is he who lives with the best of the qualities."

"Ramanuja," concluded the Lord, "It is indeed difficult for me also to describe the qualities of a devotee !"

42. Vasu the hunter devotee of Sri Hari

There was, on Sri Venkatachala, a hunter named Vasu. He used to grow dry crops in the fields on the hill. The grain produced by him was cooked and mixed with honey and offered to Sri Varaha. Vasu never took his food without first offering it to the Lord. His wife, Chitravati, was also a very pious lady.

One day Vasu and his wife went out to collect honey for offering to the Lord. They left their son, Veeraman at their house. When it was time for the offering Veeraman boiled some rice and offered it to the Lord. Sri Varaha had no shrine then. He was taking shelter under a tree. Veeraman ate the food offered to the deity. A little later, his parents returned with honey. Vasu learnt from his son that food was already offered to the Lord without honey. He got wild and rushed to kill his son, even though Veeraman argued that he was very hungry and so ate the food. Immediately the Lord at the root of the tree revealed himself and prevented Vasu from his hasty attempt. He snatched the sword from Vasu and flung it away.

"Why are you interfering with me? This boy has violated the code of religious conduct. He deserves severe punishment" retorted Vasu.

"Your son is a votary of mine. I have therefore come personally to save him. Hereafter I shall stay here on the banks of the lake" replied Sri Varaha. The Lord then disappeared. Vasu desired to see the Lord again, but he could not.

43. Rangadas

There lived a pious brahmin ascetic, near the River Haridra, in Chola country. Lord Sree Hari was staying in that vicinity in the guise of a shepherd having been pleased with the penance of a devotee named Dhritavarma. The brahmin desired to have a vision of Lord Gopala Krishna. Lord Vishnu appeared in his dream, and told the brahmin, calling him 'Gopinath' 'Your aim Gopinath, is to have a vision of Sreenivasa, but not mine. One should meditate on his patron deity. Better go to Venkatagiri, where Sreenivasa revealed himself along with Lakshmi on the banks of Swami Pushkarini. The Vimana constructed in the last part of Kritayuga fell in ruins at the end of that yuga. In an ant hill at the foot of a tamarind tree, knee deep in the ground, an icon of mine consecrated by Sankha will be found. A few yards away from it is the sacred Bhooteswara. The sacred Gowtami cow supplied milk to me then. To the north-west of the tamarind tree I dwelt at the end of the Yuga, being worshipped by the cow. By the time you reach that place, one Rangadas, a devotee of mine from Pandya region will also be there. He will meet you. Both of you offer worship to the Icon. Your desires will be fulfilled".

Gopinath set out for Venkatachala. When he was about to ascend the hill Rangadas met him. Both traced the icon of Lord Varaha. Rangadas engaged himself in maintaining a flower garden and preparing flower garlands for the Lord. Gopinath attended to the worship of the icon under the tamarind tree. Both the devotees erected a small hut over the

icon. They raised walls around it and constructed a hall in front of it. They roofed the shrine and hall with grass. They did all services to the idol and offered fruits and roots as nyvedya to the deity.

Gods wondered at the devotion of Rangadas and Gopinath. One day, Kundala, a Gandharva, accompanied by his wife, came to Swami Pushkarini. He saw the idol of Sri Varaha and worshipped it. He spent some happy time with his wife there. Rangadas who was collecting flowers happened to see the Gandharva couple who were engaged in erotic postures. He forgot about himself and his duties. After a few moments he recovered himself and felt sorry for his mental aberration. He threw away the flowers and went to the shrine where Gopinath was attending to worship. On his way he had a dip in the holy waters of the Pushkarfni and Collected fresh flowers. Gopinath looked at Rangadas and grew wild. "The time for worship is past. You forgot your duty! Why this delay ? Tell me" shouted Gopinath, Rangadas felt ashamed and could not answer. Bending his head low, he stood in silence, even though questioned by Gopinath repeatedly.

Meanwhile a heavenly voice was heard thus : "Listen, Rangadas, A mind effected by lust can not have peace. Without peace of mind what can any body do ? I have created this illusion in your interest. You will be born as a good king and enjoy like the Gandharva you saw. Then you will renovate my temple, raise towers and construct walls, Rangadas. You will

ties from your enemies. I shall give you my conch and discus which will ensure your victory. Finally, I shall bless you with salvation. You and your family will get Moksha." Rangadas resorted to hunger strike and ended his life.

King Soweera of the Lunar dynasty had two Sons, Akasaraja and Tondaman.

Rangadas was born as Tondaman. The Chola king who was cursed by Srinivasa was born as Akararaja.

44. Tondaman prays to Lakshmi

One day Tondaman went out for hunting with his retinue. He walked in the forest on Seshachala. He saw some wild elephants and chased them. He crossed Suvarnamukhi and met sage Suka. Then he moved from forest to forest and visited goddess, Renuka who was seated like an ant-hill. He worshipped her and proceeded further south and saw a multicoloured parrot. Trying to catch it, he ran after it. The parrot cried "Srinivasa", and flew up the hill. Tondaman wanted to catch it and chased it to a field. He saw the watchman of the field but not the parrot. "Did you see a parrot?" he questioned the watchman." This multicoloured parrot is the pet bird of Sreenivasa. It stays always with him near Swami Pushkarini. No one can catch it. It roams about the whole day, as it likes, and returns to him in the evening. It stays with him the whole night. I am going to worship that God Srinivasa. You may take rest here till I return," said the watchman, Vanachara. "I will also visit the Lord of Venkatadri. Let me accompany you," said Tondaman. The Vanachara took some food mixed with honey to be offered to the Lord and accompanied the king. Both bathed in the waters of the Pushkarini and visited the Lord at the root of the tamarind tree. The Lord had four arms, wide eyes, gem-set crown and wore yellow silk clothes. His two consorts were on either of his side. His feet were covered by the ant-hill. He was tall in stature. The king and the Vanachara prostrated themselves before him. The king was in ecstasy. The Vanachara offered to the Lord the food he brought. Both the king and he part-took of the food so offered, and drank of the Pushkarini waters and returned to the hut of the Vanachara.

The next morning Tondaman returned to the city.

On the ninth day of the bright fort-night of Chaitra month, he worshipped Goddess Renuka and offered to her various dishes and plenty of Sura as Nyvedya. The Goddess was pleased and said "You will rule over your kingdom free from enemies for long." A city named after you will come up. You have the blessings of the Lord of Lords." Highly pleased, the king left for the hermitage of Suka. As requested by him, Suka narrated to him the story of Padmasarovara, thus :

"Some time ago, owing to a curse administered by sage Durvasa, Vishnu and Lakshmi had to stay on earth for some time. A lake situated nearby and called Padmasarovara, was full of golden lotus flowers. Lakshmi did penance there for many thousands of years. All Gods including Indra visited Goddess Lakshmi and paid obeisance to her thus :

"Reverence to you, O mother of Universe, Lotus faced lovely lady. You dwell in the Bilwa forest. You wear wonderful silk cloth, colourful jewels and auspicious ornaments. You hold a lotus flower in your hand. Kindly bestow your grace on me."

You are the emblem of all Rig, Yajus and Sama Vedas. You are knowledge itself. Obeisance to you. Those who are fortunate enough to attract your gracious looks become Brahma and Indra."

Goddess Lakshmi was pleased with the prayer and said "You will destroy all your enemies and return to your abode. Those who are deprived of their properties regain them, if they recite this prayer. Those who worship me with Bilwa leaves and recite the above prayer get all their desires, material and spiritual fulfilled. Those who bathe in this lake and sing my praise will

be blessed with wealth, long life, good progeny, and spiritual knowledge. After enjoying material pleasures in this world, they attain liberation in the end." Granting the boon the Goddess accompanied by Sri Vishnu mounted the Eagle vehicle, Garuda and returned to Vykuntha. As advised by sage Suke, Tondaman bathed in Padmasarovara and paid reverence to him.

Tondaman Sees Sri Varaha

Once, Lord Varaha was wandering in the fields eating syamaka grain. Vasu saw him. He took out his bow and sounded his bugles, Sri Varaha heard the sound and left the forest. Again in the night Vasu found him enter the ant hill. He wondered and began to dig the ant hill. On seeing Varaha in it Vasu fell down unconscious. Seeing his father's condition Veeraman, son of Vasu, eulogised Sri Varaha. Sri Varaha was pleased. He declared :

"I am the Lord of Lords, Varaha, residing here. Go and report to your king. Ask him to consecrate me here and to worship me. Let him purify the ant hill with black cow's milk, take me out, seat me on a stone and instal me according to the rituals prescribed." The mishada recovered. He met Tondaman and narrated to him all that he saw and heard thus :—

"O king, last night I saw a white boar moving about in the fields in the forest. I chased it. It entered an ant hill near Swami Pushkarini. I dug the ant hill and fell down in a swoon. My son rushed to the spot and prayed to the Lord, who directed me to inform you that an icon of his and his consort should be installed by sages and priests. The Lord desired that you should worship him, get compound walls raised on the northern and the southern sides of the shrae. I have come to communicate to you the Lord's directions" said Vasu.

Tondaman was very happy. He was very eager to carry out the lord's instructions. He sent for all cow men to find out where black cows could be had. All milk yielding black cows and their calves were collected at Venkatadri. Tondaman informed his wife also all that took place. That night he had a dream. He saw an under ground passages from his palace to the place where the hoar was seen entering the ant hill. He could get some clue to trace out the passage. The next morning he told his ministers and brahmins about his dream. He located the passage, carried out the lord's directions and identified the ant-hill. He planted some tamarind and champaka plants there. The tarmind tree later became the shelter for the lord and another tree for goddess Lakshmi.

All other unwanted trees and shrubs at the spot were cleared. Compound wall, main gate and tower raised, all according to the specification and directions of the lord in the dream. The lord revealed to Tondaman in the dream that a Vimana would be constructed later on by Narayana a, descendant of Tondaman. Tondaman made arrangements for the daily service of the idols. He himself offered worship to them going from his palace through the underground the passage.

45. Tondaman and Akasa Raja

Akasaraj was the ruler of the region. He had no children.

He approached his Guru and represented :

“Sir, why am I not blessed with children ?

I have visited holy places and donated many things. Did I kill anybody's sons ? Perhaps I am a sinner. I learn that a man without a son will go to Hell. What am I to do?” he wept and fell down in a swoon crying “I am an unlucky wretch. I could not have a daughter even”. He prayed to all Gods to pity him. He requested his Guru to advise him as to how he could beget a son. The Guru instructed him to perform a Yagna by which his desire would be fulfilled. The king began to plough with a golden plough the land selected. While ploughing, he saw a lotus with one thousand petals. He was amazed. In that lotus was seated a charming girl resembling Lakshmi. The king took the girl into his hands. He heard a heavenly voice announcing : “This is your daughter. Bring her up well. You will earn fame through her”. The king's joy knew no bounds. He handed over the child to his queen, saying : “This is the child granted to us by God. Treat her as your own daughter, born of your womb.” He named the child as Padmavathi as she was found in a Padma (lotus).

The arrival of the young girl was a prelude to other good luck to Akasaraaja. The queen conceived shortly afterwards; and gave birth to a male child on the evening of a thursday,

The King presented numerous gifts to many on the happy occasion, millions of cows, clothes and cart-loads of grain. The new born was named Vasudana. Padmavathi grew up and came of age. Akasaraaja was worried about her marriage. One day, Padmavathi, went to the royal gardens, accompanied by her friends to collect flowers. Flowers were picked up. Then the girls were taking rest under a tree. Narada, the celestial sage came there in the guise of an old man. The friends of the princess questioned him about the prospective bride-groom for Padmavati. The ever wandering sage described the beauty of the princess thus "Your face resembles the Moon. Your teeth resemble pomegranate seeds, your cheeks are golden mirrors, and your nose is like a seasumum flower. Your gait is that of an elephant. Your lips are red, like blood. Your eyes bloom like lotus flowers. Your back looks like an sacrificial altar. "Finally, the sage said : "You look like Lakshmi, born from the milky ocean."

The maids then requested Narada to study the palm of Padmavathi and delineate her future. "I am yourr family Guru. Let me see the lines in your palm. I am like your father" said Narada to Padmavathi, who then showed her palm to him. "Your husband will be the Lord of Lakshmi and the Lord of the three Worlds. The lines in your palm and also the features of your face indicate this" the sage went on to say. He described the charm of Padmavathi from head to toe and departed singing the praise of Kamala and saluting her mentally.

46. Srinivasa sees Padmavathi

Once, Srinivasa wanted to go out to hunt wild beasts. He thought of a horse to ride. A white horse of the best breed, neatly decorated appeared in a moment before him. Srinivasa clad himself exquisitely, wore all elegant ornaments. He painted his forehead with a beautiful Namam. He girded up his loins with a golden belt. He took the bow and arrows. Looking like Cupid he rode the white horse. He hunted several wild animals and chased an elephant which was roaming. The elephant stopped in the garden of princess, Padmavathi. After covering some distance, it prostrated before Srinivasa, raised its trunk and roared.

At that time, Padmavathi accompanied by her friends, collected some flowers in the same garden, and rested under a tree. Meanwhile, Srinivasa appeared on the scene chasing the elephant. He saw Padmavathi and her companions. Padmavathi also looked at him. Srinivasa tried to approach her. Padmavathi instructed her friends to find out who the intruder was. "What for are you here, young man?" the maidens questioned Srinivasa. "I have some business with the princess, lovely girls" replied Srinivasa.

"Who are you? Who are your parents? What business have you here? Let us know, please" the maidens continued their interrogation. "I am in search of a bride" said Srinivasa. "I belong to Sindhuputra. My father is Vasudeva and my mother, Devaki. Balarama is my brother. Subhadra is my sister. Pandavas are related to me" he went on narrating. "I was born on the eighth day day in the dark half of the month. So, they named me

as Krishna. My colour is also black, as you see. "I have many names. Now I am a resident of Venkatachala. I have a conch and a discus" he added.

Padmavathi then gave out her biodata. "I am Padmavathi, daughter of Akasaraaja, born from earth in the lineage of Atri". So saying she requested Srinivasa to withdraw. "Why are you so harsh?" observed Srinivasa. "I love you. I want to marry you," he declared. Padmavathi grew wild. "You are indulging in unwanted talk. Your behaviour is outrageous. Don't you want to live? If my father comes to know about you, he will surely make short work of you," she warned. "You are a maid. I am a bachelor. What is wrong there? Is the king so unjust?" questioned Srinivasa. "Listen, you fool, Don't prattle any more and don't invite any troubles" admonished Padmavathi. "One who is born is sure to die some day or other. Fate leads every one. Why does the king kill me?" remarked Srinivasa. He tried to go nearer the princess. "Why do you want to die so soon for no reason? pointed out the maidens. "Whatever fate has ordained, shall happen. Let any thing occurs I am going to marry you" retorted Srinivasa to the princes. Padmavathi grew wild and pelted stones on Srinivasa, who coolly withdrew to his abode. Sick with love, the Lord was bed-ridden, looking like the divine child on the banyan tree. He recollected that Padmavathi was none other than his Lakshmi.

It was mid-day. Vakulamalika, his cook brought him food. She saluted him with fold hands. But Srinivasa did not notice her. His attention was engaged otherwise. He was pining with love. "I have brought your lunch. Please get up, Srinivasa. How is it you look like one in deep love?" Vakula questioned. Srinivasa did not answer. "Are you sick? I shall get you all the medicines required," Vakula added. "Are you then afraid of any

thing?" She queried. "What have you seen in the forest? Whom have you seen? An angel or a maiden? Let me know about the girl who has stolen your heart" asked she slowly. Srinivasa sighed. Vakula made further detailed enquiries from him about the cause for his state. Srinivas enlightened her about the previous birth of Padmavathi. "That divine lady, who played the part of Sita, is now in Narayanapura as Padmavathi. I am unable to describe her beauty. I cannot live without her. Mother, Vakula, please go there and see the girl. You will be able to appreciate my mind then," requested. Srinivasa.

"I was beaten by her with stones" he pointed out appealingly. Vakula assured him that she was prepared to help him in the matter and see that his ambition was fulfilled. Srinivasa then began to tickle Vakula by praising her. "You are my mother my uncle, and my brother. You are Prahlada, Akrura, Dhruva, Gajraj, Uddhava and Drowpadi. Why all this? You are all my votaries put together. Brahma created you to relieve my sorrow. My dear mother, By securing a matrimonial alliance, one acquires the merit which accrues by donating one million cows. Why mother, You will yourself appreciate my anguish if you see the girl" said Srinivasa. Vakula was curious to know about the previous life of Padmavati. Srinivasa narrated it "In the Tretayuga, I incarnated as Rama. Obeying the command of my father, Dasaratha, I went to the forest in exile accompanied by my wife, Sita and my brother, Lakshmana. Ravana, a demon of ill-repute, took away Sita by force to his country, Lanka, by air. Sita wept and cried "O Rama, Lakshmana, Raghava." Hearing her wailings, Agnidev shot up from Pathala and entreated Ravana saying Leave her. She is the daughter of Janaka. Raghava entrusted her to my care. He is now in the forest." But, Ravana did not care to heed. Agnidev took Sita and entrusted her to the care of his wife,

Swaha, keeping a substitute for Sita in the hands of Ravana. Ravana mistook the substitute to be real Sita and kept her under a simsupa tree in his Asoka garden in Lanka. The deputy entered the fire to establish her chastity, when Rama killed Ravana and recovered her. There were two Sitas. I then directed the real Sita to tell me about the second lady. "She is the one, my lord, who suffered for my sake. She is Vedavathi. Kindly marry her" Sita requested me. As Rama, I am wedded to monogamy. I shall accept Vedavathi in Dwaparayuga" I promised. Vedavathi then left for Brahmaloaka. That Vedavathi is this Padmavathi" concluded Srinivasa.

Vakula felt happy to learn about the previous life of Padmavathi. She offered to meet Akasaraaj at once. Srinivasa rejoiced. He enlightened Vakula about the journey to be undertaken by her. "Mother, go that way. You will reach the sacred KapilaLinga. Have a dip in the teertha and offer prayers to Kapi-leswara on my behalf. Then proceed to Padmasarovara, pay homage to the deities there and from there go to Suvarnamukhi. Kindly do whatever is necessary for my sake" he beseeched her.

Vakula rode on horse-back and did as directed by Srinivasa. She proceeded first to Lord Agastyeswara and offered prayers to him. She had a holy dip in the sacred Padma lake, saluted Chayasuka, who was doing penance there. She came across Balabhadra, who was on pilgrimage, and prostrated before him. She took a golden lotus flower from the lake and journeyed further. After crossing the River Suvarnamukhi and forest, she reached the banks of River Arani and took rest for a while. Then she reached Narayanapuram. From there she went to Akasanagar. In the garden near the city, she saw Padmavathi on her way to a temple along with her companions. On enquiry, she learnt the

circumstances in which the princess was going to offer worship in the temple. "Our princess happened to see a beautiful youth yesterday. He was black as sapphire and smiling. In his lengthy arms he carried golden arrows and bow. He wore a golden crown and had many costly ornaments on his body. Padmavathi drew our attention to that young man. While we were still looking at him he vanished. Thereafter, our princess fell down in a swoon. We carried her to the palace. Our king observed the condition of his daughter. He sent for the royal astrologers, and consulted them about the present planetary position of the princess. The astrologers said 'Moon is in the ascendant. He is the Lord of the House. Guru is in the Kendra. We have calculated all aspects of the chart. Your daughter will recover soon. A certain youth has met her. On seeing him, she fell down in a swoon. You can verify our readings from her. They advised Akasaraja to worship Lord Agastyeswara through pious brahmins. Akasa raja sent for brahmins and gave them necessary instructions. He enquired his daughter and asked her to worship Agastyeswara. We are on our way to the temple" said the maidens. They questioned Vakula who she was. She replied that she was the servant of Lord Venkateswara. I have some work with the queen. I am on my way to the palace". The maidens escorted Vakula to their queen.

17. Srinivasa becomes Sooth Sayer

After Vakula left, Srinivasa was anxious. "An only son is good as no son. A single eye is as good as having no eyes at work entrusted to women does not yield good results" he thought. He wanted to do the job personally. Immediately he reverted himself as a woman. He wore a saree. He made Brahma child, and Siva his hand-stick. He himself became a soothsayer. The child was fastened to her saree. He was crying. The soothsayer held the stick in her hand. Along with Brahma and abhu, Srinivasa as soothsayer arrived at Narayanapuram. In the streets of the city, she shouted "Here I am to bless every one. Whoever wants husbands, children and relations and anything, come to me at once". The women of the locality flocked to her saying "Here comes a soothsayer from the Ashram of Vanarayana- Let us consult her".

The queen saw the fortune-teller announcing loudly "I shall reveal the past and future accurately". She sent for her. She presented to her pearls in a golden basket and asked her to narrate all about her daughter. The fortune teller demanded more pearls as consultation fee. Queen Bharani offered her food also. "After since your daughter saw the youth, she had fallen in love with him" the soothsayer began her narration. "The youth is

Lord of the Lords come down from Vykuntha. He dwells on the peak of Venkatadri near Swami Alakarini. He is Srechari, the omnipotent. Your

fell in love with your daughter, who is equal to Laksm. He has sent his maid servant to you. Your daughter will enjoy like Lakshmi if she marries him" she added. The queen addressed the sooth-sayer as Dharmadevata. "Dear Queen," the sooth sayer continued her narration. "I speak the truth bluntly. If my readings and predictions go wrong you can cut off my tongue. My husband is Lord Nara Narayana. This child was born to us. He is Prajapati. I am ordered to go to you. I can reveal the past, present and future."

The queen offered a good seat to the sooth sayer. "Have a bath and dress up yourself neatly and come" said the sooth sayer. Dharani got some delicious dishes brought in golden vessels and gave to the child in the arms of Dharma Devata. But the child refused to eat. He began to cry. "Yes, you eat roots and fruits only! Why do you accept tasty dishes?" observed Dharma Devata. She gave a few beatings to the baby. She herself consumed the food and wanted betel leaves and nuts. Angels and gods desired to have the pleasure of witnessing the scene! They arrived, saw and pointed out :-

"Along with Lakshmi, Bhagavan is sporting like one who knows nothing!".

After having her lunch, Dharmadevatha began to predict, She prayed to all gods and goddesses commencing with Narayana and then to Lakshmi, Saraswathi, Siva, Uma, Indra, Sachi, Narasimha, Jagannatha, Kala Hasteeswara, Sri Ranganath, Subrahmanya and then to the sacred Rivers Ganga, Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Suvarnamukhi, and then to Mookambika, Kalabhyarava, Kamakshi, Visalakshi, Meenakshi and others. She remembered Mahalakshmi of Kolhapuri. Pearls were brought by the Queen's servants and placed in front of the sooth-sayer,

so gave the stick to the queen and through it grasped her hand.

"Tell me, Madam, am I not correct? Yesterday, a youth came on horse back. Your daughter has fallen in love with him, Mother, listen, your daughter desires to have Lord Venkateswara as her husband. Her desire will be fulfilled soon". So saying, the soothsayer wanted some more betel leaves and nuts. They were brought.

"The youth, who was in a hunter's guise is the cupid cupids. Your daughter is now sick. I shall do something to cure her.", continued the foreteller. Asked to state the remedial measures, Dharmadevata narrated :

"Madam, Lord Sri Hari, popular as Srinivasa, is now residing on Venkatachala. He is lovely, rich and powerful. Your daughter beat his horse, which is now lying near the gate of his garden". She described the details of the incident and instructed the queen to offer her daughter to Srinivasa.

The queen entertained a doubt as to how an offer could be made without a proposal from the bridegroom's side. She was never convinced by the soothsayer and was prepared to do anything to save her daughter's life.

Assuring her help Dharmadevata departed. The queen went weeping to her daughter and asked her to disclose her mind. "Tell me your desire, my dear daughter. There is no friend to a girl except her mother. I am here to fulfill your desire. Otherwise, I will consume poison and die" she told.

Padmavathi slowly opened up her mind. "Mother, the other day, obtaining your permission I went to our garden. I

saw there a beautiful young man with lovely features. Without him, mother, I cannot live. He is Lord Purushottama. He held a discus in his right hand and a conch in his left. He was adorned with Kaustubha gem. The city of Varanasi was burnt by the power of his discus. Hearing the sound of his conch demons flee" she added. The mother confirmed to herself the cause of her daughter's feverish state. The queen consoled her daughter and told the king all that had happened.

Just at that time, Vakula arrived. At the same time, the brahmins who went to do Abhisheka to Siva also returned after finishing the Abhisheka and Pooja. The king received them with due respect. In return he received their blessings. The queen enquired the maidens about Vakula and the purpose of her visit. "Vakula who is in the service of Sri Venkateswara told us that she had some business with you. We have accompanied her" they said. The queen offered seats to all including Vakula.

"My main purpose is to select a bride for our Lord Srinivasa. I have come from Venkatachala. My name is Vakulamalika. Lord Narayana also dwells on that hill," said Vakula. The queen asked her to give more particulars of the prospective bride-groom. "What is his name? Who are his parents? What is his birth star?" she questioned. "My dear queen, he is the son of Devaki and Vasudeva. His name is Krishna, Gothra that of Vasishtha. Star Sravanam. Residence: Venkatagiri. Qualifications: Educated, rich, strong, age twenty five. Why ask for more particulars? You will see him at the wedding and be very happy" answered Vakula.

The queen had one more doubt on hearing the biodata of the bride-groom. "Why is such a highly qualified youth still unmarried?" she asked. Vakula cleared the doubt.

"He was married while he was yet a boy. But no children. So he wants to marry again" she said. The queen sent for the king. Akasaraaja came. "Here is the lady who has come for our daughter. My Lord, consider all aspects. Your daughter also wants to marry the Lord of Venkatachala" said the queen to him. Akasaraaja was immensely glad. "How lucky I am! I am going to see my daughter's marriage?" he thought. He sent for Padmavathi. The bride came.

"Whatever you desire, my dear daughter, I shall see that it is done. Don't worry" he assured her. "Mother" knows everything" hinted Padmavathi. Dharanidevi then said "Arrange for the marriage, my lord, without delay". The king confirmed Padmavathi that she would surely marry Sriinivasa. He sent an invitation to Guru through his son. Brihaspati, the Royal Purohit arrived.

"Sir, as ordered by you. I shall perform my daughter's marriage. This lady has come with marriage proposals." said the king. Brihaspathi asked him to invite Suka. Tondaman, brother of the king personally went and invited Suka. Suka was extremely happy to hear the proposed alliance. He danced in ecstacy. "The wedding of Srinivasa with the king's daughter is most auspicious to all the worlds": "so saying he had a holy dip in the waters of Padma Teertha, offered his noon prayers, dressed up his head, wore Tulsi leaves around his neck and arrived. Akasaraaja received him with all honours due, prostrated before the great sage and brought him on an elephant. After the sage was seated comfortably Akasa Raja announced his proposal saying "I offer my daughter, Padmavathi, to Krishna, Srinivasa, if the sage also so blesses".

Suka said "O great king, do not hesitate. Blessed are you, your family, and your fore-fathers. The propitious deeds of yours in your previous births are responsible for your present good luck. The Almighty, Lord Srinivasa is going to be your son-in-law. There is no one more fortunate than you. There should be no delay in doing good things. We are fortunate by our association with you. We are anchorites detached from all attachments. We are lucky to have been able to see the Lord with your daughter, Sreedevi".

48. Suka the Emissary

Akasa-*raja* was rejoicing. He offered a seat to Suka. Brihaspati enquired Vakula about the birth details of the bride-groom. Vakula got a bit angry she said.

"Brahmins who adhere to truth are speaking lies in Kali-yuga. They do not speak out which is good and which is not, even though they know." Suka pacified her. "The bride-groom's birth star is Sravana. Gotra-Vasishta. It is said that he is one who incarnated as Mātṣya, Kurma, Varaha and Krishna" said Vakula.

"The bride's star is Mrigasiras, Gotra that of Atri. She is the incarnation of Sita and Satya- Her present name is Padmavathi" said the king.

After astrological calculations, the auspicious time for the marriage was fixed. All the relatives and friends were invited. Akasa-*raja* worshipped Lord Ganesh and announced his decision in the Assembly thus :-

"I offer Padmavathi, my daughter to Srinivasa in marriage. All of you be pleased to bless the bride and the bride-groom". Brihaspathi advised the king to draft the wedding invitation. At the king's request Brihaspati personally dictated the invitation. The invitation was addressed to the Almighty, Everlasting, Ever blissful, All pervading, Lord of Lords, Vishnu, Srinivasa, resident of Venkātachala. After blessing him, Akasa-

raja stated the welfare of his own family and enquired about that of the Lord. The next para of the invitation ran :-

"Govinda, I intend to offer Padmavathi, my daughter, to you. Be pleased to accept my offer. You need not entertain any doubt. The tenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Visakha, is fixed for the marriage. I invite you cordially to go over here with your relations and friends and marry my daughter. What else is there for me to state? Whatever sage Suka advises, please follow, Kesava."

The letter was dated the 13th day of the bright fortnight of the month of Chaitra. Suka was requested to deliver the invitation. The king escorted him for about a krose and implored "O great sage, I am prepared to offer any amount to the bride-groom. Please see that he accepts my offer, somehow or other." So saying the king returned. Suka continued his journey.

Lord Srinivasa was very anxious. He was worried that Vakula had not arrived yet. Meanwhile Suka met him.

"What is the outcome? Yes or No?" Srinivasa enquired Suka. On hearing the affirmative reply from Suka, Srinivasa prostrated himself before the sage. Getting up he hugged the sage and felt most happy.

"By uttering even a thousand lies, one marriage alliance should be settled" people say. While that is the saying about marriages of human beings, who have ordinary families and houses, more so about my marriage. The Universe is my home, Brahma is my son, born from my navel. Lakshmi is my spouse. You have arranged my marriage. What can I present to you, O

deared than my body. As Rama, I embraced Hanuman when he rescued Sita and reported to me her whereabouts. That was the only occasion when I hugged any male," said Srinivasa. He noticed something in the armpit of Suka and asked "What is that shining thing in your armpit, sage?" Suka said "It is a letter sent to you by the king." Srinivasa took it and read it. He was happy to note its contents.

He wrote his reply as follows :

"Thanks, Akasaraaja, for your letter.

I am very glad to note its contents. the tenth day of the bright fortnight of Vysakha month suits me. Long ago, Sagara gave his daughter to me in marriage. He thus became famous. Similarly you will also get renown by giving your daughter to me. Sage Kapila brought the seas and Bhagiratha brought down River Ganga and earned name and fame. You will also attain fame. Your forefathers will be blessed by your deed. What else is there for me to write ? You are very learned. Sage Suka knows everything."

The Lord handed over the letter to Suka. But soon he entertained a doubt.

"Not knowing my Gothram or ancestry how does the king celebrate the marriage?" He expressed his doubt to the messary.

"You have neither Gothrm, nor family. You have neither begining nor end, Hari. You do not have old age also. You are the supreme being. On my proposal the king has decided to offer you his daughter. Govinda, be pleased to accept the king's daughter" entreated Suka. Srinivasa nodded

his head expressing his consent. With over-whelming joy, Suka returned to Akasaraja.

Meanwhile, Vakula met Srinivasa. "Mother, what is the matter? What news have you brought from there? Why are you so late?" the Lord asked her.

Vakula replied: "I had to try my best to get the girl for you, my boy. From Narayanasharam, dear Krishna, we entered the palace, by God's grace. The queen convinced the king and Akasaraja agreed. In his Royal assembly he announced his decision for his daughter's marriage with you. There is no God other than you."

Srinivasa rejoiced. He smiled. He wanted to have fun for a while.

"I do not want to marry at all. I have no relations. The king has many. I have no money also. Alliance with people of equal status is desirable: I am a lonely man. The king has both men and money. How does he like to offer his daughter to a solitary poor person like me?" he observed.

"Suka has arranged everything for you. He has secured this alliance. The queen also is a righteous lady. Kindly do not disappoint her. Just consider, boy. You are not a lonely person. You have every one, Brahma, Rudra and so many. They will all attend your marriage. The king will be happy to receive all your party. Don't worry" pleaded Vakula.

Srinivasa was well impressed. He thought of Garuda and Sesha. In an instant, both were before him. "You, king of birds, go to Satyaloka where my son is" the lord instructed Garuda. "You, king of serpents, proceed to my grand-son,

Siva," the Lord ordered Sesa- A letter written by him addressed to Brahma was handed over to Garuda. The king of birds flew quickly to Satyaloka and delivered the letter to Brahma. "It is long since you met, Garuda, where is my father?" Brahma enquired Garuda. "Your father, Vasudeva is on Venkatachala. I have now come here in connection with his marriage. Here is his letter to you." So saying, Garuda handed over the letter to Brahma. The letter commenced with the Lord's blessings and extended an invitation to Brahma to attend the Lord's marriage with the daughter of Akasaraaja." "Immediately on seeing this invitation start with your children, companions, the eight Dikpalakas, Gandharvas, Uragas and their families. You can witness the wedding and return" the letter concluded. Brahma was immersed in joy. He gave suitable directions to all the concerned to get ready for the journey. Kettle drums were sounded. Bugles were blown. When asked by any one, "Sir, where are we going?" Brahma replied: "On to Seshachala, south of Jamboo Dweepa in Bharathavarsha". He extended personal invitation to all very important persons and chiefs of staff saying: "My father Srinivasa is going to wed in Kaliyuga for the good of every one. All of you are cordially invited to attend the wedding."

49. The Marriage Party Sets Forth

Brahma granted advance travelling allowances to his staff to enable them to undertake the journey. He himself got ready. He wore a crown on one of his four heads. He put on a red turban on the second head. He embellished the third head dress. An ornament made of kusha grass adorned the fourth head. He wore gem-set ear rings, golden amulets and an armour, also gem set. He girded up his loins with a golden belt, set with pearls and gems. Accompanied by goddesses Saraswathi, Savithri and Gayatri his children and grand-children, all tastefully dressed, and decorated, Brahma rode on his swan. All his forces accompanied him. He shone like the moon among the stars. Thousands of trumpets, drums and other instruments of music were sounded. Gandharvas, well versed in music rendered songs melodiously. Apsaras danced. Eager to witness Srinivasa's wedding all Gods and Devathas proceeded to the marriage venue. The party passed through Satya, Tapo, Jana, Mahar, Suvar, Swarga and Mahatala worlds. The beings dwelling in these worlds beheld the wonderful sight. Everyone could recognise Brahma. Questioned about their destination the members of the party were replying. "We are going to Bhooloka to witness the wedding of Srinivasa". Those who happened to hear about Brahma's journey followed him. Sages also accompanied the party on the way. Finally, Brahma and his party reached Venkatachala.

At that time Srinivasa was enquiring Vakula thus "How is it mother, Garuda has not returned yet? May be, somebody bostructed him! If not, why is there such a

mean while, information reached Srinivasa that Brahma was just then crossing the River Ganga. Immediately news was flashed to him that the party crossed River Godavary. By then, Garuda arrived and reported : "My Lord, your son has just now crossed the River Krishna also. He is nearing Sreesailam" Vishwakshena brought the latest news that Brahma and party were crossing Tumburu teertha. Srinivasa started on his Eagle back. Vishwakshena proceeded in advance and told Brahma that his father was coming to receive him. Brahma got down his vehicle and walked. He prostrated before Lord Srinivasa. The Lord also got down his vehicle and embraced Brahma saying : "My son, it is long since we met. Get up". Both father and son shed tears of joy. Each looked at the other's face with extreme delight. God's were overwhelmed with pleasure when they saw Srinivasa with his son. "No where in the world are there such a father and son!" they observed. Srinivasa then took his son to his quarters. After seating him he enquired about his welfare and his family's. "We are well. Dear father, Kesava, How do you do?" asked Brahma. Srinivasa then narrated to his son the circumstances, that led to his marriage with Padmavathi. "Listen, my dear son," said he, "At the end of the Dwaparayuga, when I was in deep meditation, one day, sage Bhrgu kicked my chest, the seat of your mother. Unable to bear the shock, your mother left me for Karaveerapura. I have come over here and stayed in a snake hill."

The Lord gave an account of the subsequent happenings and introduced Vakula to Brahma. Brahma asked his father "Where was this mother of yours born previously? Father, I shall be glad to know". Srinivasa enlightened his son that Yasoda was born as Vakula and took great care of him all these days. "Any one who happens to save others in distress is the father and the Guru," observed Srinivasa. He explained how he happened to see Padmavathi and fell in love with her.

Meanwhile, the sounds of drums were heard. Bhagavan Sankara, his family and party arrived. Srinivasa received Siva, embraced him and seated him by his side. While they were conversing, Kubera, his family, friends and servants arrived. Srinivasa blessed Kubera with continuous riches. Next arrived Agni with his wife, riding on his goat. Next followed Yama, Indra and others. The bride-groom received all with due honour and courtesy. All went up the hill. The Sun, Moon, Vayu, Cupid, the seven great sages, Gandharvas, Apsaras and kings were the next to arrive. Every one was seated very comfortably. The divine sculptor was also there. On account of his pride, and silence, he was reprimanded by the Lord. He begged the Lord's pardon. The celestial carpenter then constructed a huge pandal and decorated it expediently. The Lord then asked Indra to go to the City of Akasaraaja. Indra accompanied by Viswakarma proceeded as directed by the Lord. Huge and beautiful sheds were raised. A nice platform was constructed for the wedding. Decorated tastefully with all sorts of arches, bedecked with gems and pillars, flags and festoons, the dias looked very elegant.

The bride-groom obtained the permission of all the Gods and elders congregated there saying "I desire to marry the daughter of Akasaraaja with the consent of you all". Sankara remarked in a humorous vein "Krishna, you talk jocularly. Carry on." The Lord smiled. "You know everything" said Brahma. Vasishtha, the divine Purohit was requested to conduct the wedding ceremony. Duties were assigned to all Gods. The procedure prescribed in the Yajus sakha was followed. Vasishtha presided over the ritual. Cupid was also invited. Havyavahana was requested to take charge of the kitchen as the Rishis and Devas all agreed to his supervision of it. Varuna was put in charge of water supply. Yama was to look after the administra-

tion of justice. Vayu was to arrange cool breeze and scented air. Treasury was to be managed by Kubera. Thus all arrangements were finalised.

Brahma then requested Govinda to have his auspicious bath and to worship his family deities. On hearing his son, Srinivasa remembered Lakshmi who was then in Karaveerapura. Like an ordinary mortal he wept. "My son," he said, "Just as the sky without the Moon or the stars, just as trees without fruits, like forest without trees, this function lacks splendour without Lakshmi". Sankara tried to console Srinivasa. He asked him to tell why he was so sorry. "You are after all a child. You do not know, Sambhu" remarked Srinivasa.

"Even at the time of the final deluge she did not leave me. How can I be happy without her?" he observed. "We shall depute some one to bring her" said Brahma. The Sun was instructed to go to Karaveerapura and bring Lakshmi. He sought instructions from Srinivasa. Srinivasa instructed him suitably. "Go there, Put on a sorrowful face. Wiping your tears, see her. She will ask you the reason. Tell her that I am ill" he told. Brahma smiled. "The Divine lady knows everything. Can I utter a lie before her?" pointed out Diwakara, "Do not hesitate, O Sun, my illusion will do all that" said the Lord.

The Sun proceeded at once and did as directed by Srinivasa. Lakshmi lost no time. She rushed to Srinivasa, escorted by messenger Ravi. Learning that Lakshmi has come, Srinivasa lay down in the bed pretending to be ill. The divine lady saw him, placed some flowers on his feet and embraced him. Srinivasa recovered instantaneously. Both exchanged

"How do you dos ?" Lakshmi asked Srinivasa "You have sent for me so suddenly. What is the matter, my Lord?". "My good Lady, you remember that incident ?" Srinivasa said.

"I was Rama. You were Sita. You desired that I should marry Vedavathi. I assured you then that I would fulfil your desire some time later in Kaliyuga. That time has come now" added Srinivasa, Goddess Lakshmi recollected that incident. She gave her approval for Srinivas's marriage with Padmavathi. She saluted the Lord who in turn expressed his pleasure. Every one was happy. Tears of joy streamed from all eyes. The Lord then instructed his son to get everything ready. Huge vessels were filled with fragrant water. Married women whose husbands were alive began to make all necessary preparations. Arundhati headed the team. Songs befitting the occasion were sung. Angels sang melodiously the glory of Krishnavatara. Vakula, the foster mother of Srinivasa, and Saraswathi, his daughter-in-law and others made all necessary arrangements for the auspicious bath of the bride-groom.

"Get up, O the best of men. Be seated here" they requested Srinivasa. But, Srinivasa again put on a morose face with tearful eyes. "O learned Brahma, who will give me the auspicious bath at this moment ? I have no father. I have no mother. How unlucky I am ! There is none to help me. No brothers, no sisters, no uncles. Where can an orphan go ? There is no friend like mother, no happiness equal to a father, no fortune like the wife". So saying Govinda was sad like a mortal. Brahma consoled him and said " Why do you say that you have none ? Is that not false ? Am I not your son ? Your grandson Siva is here. Manmadha, your son and grand-sons also are present. Your daughter-in-law, Bharathi had already come here. Your wife, Goddess Lakshmi has

so arrived. You are unnecessarily worried". Lakshmi could grasp her husband's mind. "I know your mind. I shall attend to your auspicious oil bath" she said. Srinivasa obtained the permission of the sage and went for his bath. He requested Lakshmi to do the needful. "May you live long, Govinda" Lakshmi began to sing. "May you beget many children. May you be the ruler of the fourteen worlds" so saying the divine lady began to arrange for the bride-groom's auspicious oil bath. Multitudes of married women whose husbands were alive blessed the bride-groom saying "May you have many children and much wealth". Lakshmi dressed the Lord's hair. Scented hair oil was brought by Preeti, wife of Vidhi. Sruthi brought clothes.

Smrithi brought jewels and ornaments. Dhriti brought a looking glass. Kanti brought musk. Yaksha brought flowers. They stood in front of the bride-groom. Keerthi brought silk clothes and diadem bedecked with precious stones. Indrani brought an umbrella. Saraswathi brought a fan, Chamara. Gowri handled another fan. Seeing all the ladies, Lakshmi got up and brought scented oil, and anointed the head of the bride-groom. Sandal powder was applied to the bride-groom's body. Water from Vasaganga in hundreds of golden vessels was brought on elephant back. The bride-groom was given the auspicious bath. Scented sticks were burnt and his hair dried up with their fragrant smoke. Aromatic scents were applied to his body. His body was dressed with silk clothes. A golden belt fastened them around his waist. Lakshmi personally decorated him with the diadem, jewels, and gem-set rings. Dhriti showed him the looking glass. Looking into it the Lord personally painted the Oordhva Pundra marks on his forehead. The bridegroom then mounted Garuda along with Lakshmi. All proceeded to the venue for wedding. The procedure

laid down in the scriptures was followed meticulously in the conduct of the wedding ceremony.

"Our family deity is the sacred Sami tree" said Srinivasa. Agastya located the tree. The bridegroom went round it praising it. He then offered worship to his family goddess. As advised by Narada, he went to Lord Varaha accompanied by Vesihtah and invited him to attend the marriage. But Lord Vasishtha said "Vakula will represent me." In a golden vessel, filled with pearls and covered by a costly cloth, the family goddess was offered worship and consecrated near Lord Varaha. Srinivasa was conducting himself as an ordinary human being!

He thought that a messenger should leave in advance for Akasanagar without taking food even. "My dear boy, proceed to Narayanapura in advance. Don't waste time. The four forces and sages. will accompany you" said Srinivasa to a messenger. Brahma however, felt that it would be better if the messenger went after taking food. "You are not considering the circumstances. You are speaking like a child. So much expenditure has to be met!" pointed out Srinivasa. Brahma kept quiet. Lord Siva intervened and said: "As in the case of construction of a house, so also performance of a marriage! One should try his best. Meeting heavy expenditure also, all arrangements have to be made". The bridegroom asked "who will be my creditor to finance a grand marriage? Mere talk is of no use". Kubera was present there. The bridegroom, Brahma and Siva took him aside to a solitary place west of Swami Pushakarini. "Kindly advance the amount needed for my marriage the bride-groom," requested Kubera. "The entire Universe is at your beck and call. All my money is yours. I have no control over it. You are its master" said Kubera. Finally, Kubera agreed to lend the money required if the necessary document was

executed by the debtor. Brahma then dictated a promissory note. The note was executed.

"This, the 7th day of the bright-fortnight of the month of Vysakha in Kaliyuga, The debtor is Srinivasa, the creditor is Dhaneswara. Purpose : marriage of the loanee. Amount of Loan fourteen lakhs in Ramamudra coins. The loanee should repay it with interest in one thousand years after the loanee's marriage." Brahma and Siva attested as witnesses. The scribe was the loanee himself. After accepting the promissory note, Kubera paid the amount in cash. Srinivasa requested Kubera to purchase and get all the articles and material required for the marriage Viz., clothes, pulses, rice, wheat the auspicious Mangalya thread etc.,

"Lord, I shall arrange every thing. Please ask Agni to take charge of the kitchen" requested the God of wealth. The bride-groom deputed Shanmukha to invite Agni. Havyavahana arrived. Srinivasa requested him to prepare all the dishes in an instant.

"But, Krishna, where are the utensils? Not even one is available," pointed out Agni. Srinivasa gave the hints thus : "Utensils are not absolutely essential", he observed: "Rice can be cooked in Swami Pushkarini. Dhal can be cooked in Papavinasalake. Akasaganga will provide the drinking water". Agni followed the instructions. All dishes were ready. The bride-groom sent Shanmukha to invite the guests. All invitees arrived. Protocol was observed in seating them. Dishes were served quickly. Srinivasa suggested that food should be offered to the deity, the Almighty first. "You are the Almighty. To whom else are we to offer?" questioned Brahma. "Worship Nrisimha of Ahobila first and offer it to him" said Srinivasa,

Brahma did so. He offered worship to the guests also. The sages offered the food to Sri Nrisimha, Vishnu, Krishna. Every one shouted "Govinda". At the request of Vasudeva the guests did full justice to their jobs. The bride-groom thanked the Rishis who have responded to his invitation. Brahmins were rewarded sumptuously after the feast. Next the bride-groom, his relatives, friends and other dined. As night had fallen, Srinivasa withdrew to his private chambers. He never sleeps. Yet he went to his bed as an ordinary human being! The sages rested under the trees and the caves nearby.

Early the next morning Srinivasa sent Garuda to bring Brahma. "Sir, Proceed on your swan to the bride-groom who is near the Marriage Venue. Dress yourself up neatly and elegantly. Take along with you all instrumental musicians and vehicles." said Garuda to Brahma. Suitable directions were given by Brahma to all the concerned. Brahma led the party and met the bride-groom. Srinivasa questioned Brahma, "why this delay?" Brahma replied "Everything is ready, my lord. Please be seated on Garuda." Sri Hari mounted on Garuda. He asked Brahma to head the party. He instructed Siva to be on his right side. Vayu was to be on the left of the bride-groom. Shanmukha was behind. Lakshmi was seated in a golden car. Vakula was seated in an air car. Sessa held the white umbrella. Marutha held the Chamara and blew cool and fragrant breeze. Vishvaksena, the mighty, headed the band of trumpets. Dancers including Gandharvas Haha - Huhu danced. With Rishis, angels, Gandharvas, and sages the party was overcrowded. Women, the aged, the young, all in multitudes, were in the party. In the throng some wives missed their husbands, and cried for them. Children were trampled and they cried. Some wanted drinking water. Some wanted

food. Some laughed and some shouted. Wives of Suras and Vykhanas as, Rishis, Gandharvas ascended the hill, near Narayana-pura to have glimpses of the divine bridegroom. The crowd was so dense that there was no space for a mustard seed to fall on the ground. Followed by Pandits, reciting hymns from Vedas, and blessing the bridegroom and accompanied by all, the divine bridegroom reached Padma teertha. Sage Suka, son of Krishna Dwy, payana, saw Sreenivasa, and prostrated before him saying, "How blessed am I to see the Almighty!". He offered fruits and roots to the bridegroom and wanted to treat the party at a lunch. Hear the best of the sages" said Srinivasa, "You are a mere ascetic, a celibate. We are all worldly minded. We are many also. So we shall have our lunch arranged by the king" Suka argued, "I am a poor man, Govinda. You are the friend of the poor. If you eat, it means the entire Universe is fed." Vakula intervened to say that the king might be waiting having made elaborate arrangements for the lunch. At last the Lord accepted the sages' invitation.

Suka offered food with tamarind juice and fruits after worshipping Srinivasa. After prostrating himself before Srinivasa, Suka requested him to partake the offerings. Srinivasa was pleased with the sage's devotion and ate some fruits. Lakshmi and Vakula also ate the food served to them considering it as good as nectar. The other sages were annoyed at the interruption. The Lord understood their mind. He blew air with his mouth. In an instant everyone felt as if their stomachs were full. They felt no more appetite. The party halted there on Ashtami. The next day i.e., Navami, Thursday, Srinivasa mounted his eagle and proceeded. Brahmachari continued to lead the party.

At the same time there at the bride's palace, Padmavathi gave the auspicious bath. She was delightfully dressed and decorated. Akasuraja, well dressed, rode an elephant along with

the bride, and accompanied by his Purohita, children and brother Tondaman. Anxious to meet the bride groom, he went hurriedly to receive him. All the royal dancers, musicians and drummers followed him. The king and his daughter got down the elephant. The king said to the priests, "Blessed am I." Srinivasa met Akasa raja whom Narada introduced thus: "Govinda, this is the king, your father-in-law." Srinivasa remarked, "Narada, my life is blessed. I am going to be related to Akasaraaja. It is all due to the merits of my previous lives". The king advanced to receive the bridegroom at the entrance to the city. He accorded a hearty welcome to the bride-groom and presented him new cloths and ornaments.

Padmavathi, the broad eyed, beautiful bride, was overwhelmed with bashfulness. She got down. The bride and her groom looked at each other. Srinivasa and Padmavathi then went to the shrine of Goddess Durga, near the entrance to the city, and paid homage to the deity. "Make this lady as my wife"- prayed Srinivasa. Padmavathi invoked Durga, Savithri, saying "make Srinivasa, the all pervading, as my husband." Vasudeva then ascended Garuda and proceeded into the city. Brahma, other gods, brhmins and sages followed him. The citizens feasted their eyes. Gandharvas sang and Apsaras danced. Akasaraaja, along with his daughter, accompanied them. The parties slowly reached Narayanapuram. The city was beautifully decorated with festoons, arches and gems. Ladies waved lights. The bridegroom was escorted to his lovely and well furnished lodging. Tondaman arrived after a while. The bridegroom said. "My mother, children, other members of my party are hungry. Also, myself and my devoted wife, Lakshmi. Kindly arrange our lunch urgently." Tondaman replied "this body of mine and my kingdom, Lord, are all yours.

Like an ordinary man, you are asking for food". He then returned to his palace. In no time every thing was ready. Dishes were served to all. Lunch was arranged for the bride groom also. Srinivasa had his food along with his mother and Lakshmi and his personal attendants. The king presented precious new cloths to the bride-groom. At sun rise the next day, the bride-groom had his auspicious oil bath and told Vasishtha that he and Lakshmi would be fasting that day. He suggested that the bride and her purohit also would do so. He instructed Kubera to arrange for the lunch. Kubera did so.

50. The Wedding of Sreenivasa with Padmavathi

It was the day fixed for the divine wedding, the Friday
ninth day of the bright-fortnight of the month. Akasara-
ja, accompanied by his party, and priests came to Srinivasa. The bride-
groom was surrounded by great sages like Viswamitra, Bhara-
aja, Bhrigu, Atri, Vasishtha, Gowthama. Sanaka, Sanandana,
and Markandeya also were there. Srinivasa was seated on a
pet. Brahma stood by his side with folded hands. Akasa-
raja, following his purohit, went near the bride-groom. Srinivasa
got up. He embraced Akasara-ja and said: "You are old,
but the best of kings. Why did you take the trouble of going
to me here? You could have deputed your son, Vasudana to
visit me."

Akasara-ja asked his queen, Dharanidevi, to perform
the ceremony to Srinivasa, keeping Arundhati by her side. The queen
was very happy. She saw the face of Krishna, felt shy and
embraced him. The other ladies exclaimed: "What meritorious
deed did you do in your previous life? You are offering
worship personally to Sri Narayana!" The queen offered cam-
phor, sandal paste, perfumes, clothes and jewels studded with
diamonds to the bride-groom and offered worship to him.

Ordered by the purohita, Akasara-ja entreated the bride-
groom to mount the elephant with Brahma, Sambhu and other
gods. The sages and their wives also accompanied. At the
entrance to the venue for wedding the bride-groom was accorded

a grand reception with all honours. He then entered the palace which was exquisitely decorated. Every one took his assigned seat, Brahma was in the fore-front. It was a feast for all eyes to witness the assemblage of such a galaxy of Gods and men. After the bridegroom took the auspicious bath again, the bride's father presented to him new clothes. The holy Mantra 'SAHASRA EERSHA PURUSHA' was then chanted. The bride-groom's feet were laved by Akasaraaja while Dharani and Santhi poured water. The king sprinkled the washed waters on his head and on the heads of the queen, children, elephant and chariot etc.,

"Today my fathers and forefathers are blessed by the waters which laved the feet of Vasudeva," said Akasaraaja. The bride was ready, decorated already. The auspicious moments for the wedding approached. Akasaraaja presented millions of coins to his son-in-law as dowry. "Ornaments and jewels will do. You are donor par excellence!" observed Srinivasa. Innumerable jewels including diamond rings, gem-set golden belt, ear-ring, necklaces, and several other costly jewels were then presented by Akasaraaja to Srinivasa. Sage Brihaspathi then narrated the geneology of the bride.

"Born in the Gothra (Lineage) of Atri, this lotus-eyed bride is the great grand-daughter of Suveera, grand daughter of Adharmana and daughter of Akasaraaja. Kindly accept her" said the priest.

Akasaraaja presented costly clothes to the bride-groom. The geneology of the bride-groom was then cited. "Born in the lineage of Vasishtha, great grand-son of Yayathi, grand-son of the valiant Surasene, son of Vasudeva, Oh! bride-groom, kindly accept this bride. I am dedicating to you Parushottama, this bride. I am pleased to accept her" said Akasaraaja. "Thus saying, he placed the right palm of the bride in the right palm of the bridegroom,

A bracelet was fastened to the bride-groom's right fore-arm. Brihaspathi tied another bracelet to the fore-arm of the bride. The bride-groom then tied the auspicious cord, Mangalasutra, around the neck of the bride. Married women whose husbands were alive blessed the bride thus: "Oh blessed bride, may you like Savitri, beget many sons. Oh! mother of the Universe, Grant every one every auspicious thing". The next part of the marriage function was worshipping the Fire God. It was carried on. Thus the wedding was completed by Vasishtha. The sages blessed the bride groom by placing gems and Akshatas on his head. Akasaraja honoured all brahmins present suitably. Millions of cows, thousands of horses, and many clothes were presented by him to them. The marriage ceremony ended on the twelfth day of the month. The new couple and guests were treated with a feast which consisted of several costly and delicious dishes. Akasaraja was seated near Srinivasa. Next were seated Lakshmi and Dharani. Every one enjoyed the feast.

Four days were thus spent with feasts and entertainments. On the fifth day the Nagavalli was performed. It is the last item of the marriage ceremony. The bride and bride-groom were seated on a throne bedecked with gems. Akasaraja offered worship to Srinivasa and Vakula. He presented new clothes to them. Holding a vessel of milk in his hand and wetting the bride's palm with the milk, Akasaraja and his wife handed over their daughter to Srinivasa and his foster-mother, Vakula. Akasaraja and his wife were over whelmed with sorrow on their parting with their daughter. Making over charge of Padmavathi, her mother said with tears rolling in her eyes "Jagannadh, my daughter is now under your control. I am handing her over to you." The king also embraced Padmavathi. Tondaman also wept. Vasudhana, brother of the bride expe-

shed his deep sorrow. Seeing the king and queen in grief the sages present also felt sorry. Srinivasa felt sad. After a while he mounted the divine elephant, Iravatha, and left with his bride, Padmavathi and wife Lakshmi. He went round the city and reached his lodging. There he mounted his vehicle, Garuda. Akasaraaja blessed his son-in-law with longevity, and proposed that he might stay with him for a month more.

"I have a piece of urgent work there. Kindly grant me leave". requested Srinivasa. "Padmavathi is blessed. She is accompanying Govinda" remarked the citizens. Akasaraaja presented numerous gifts to his daughter and son-in-law. The gifts included cart loads of grain, pulses, tamarind, jaggery, salt, fruits, thousands of horses, cows, hundreds of maid servants, clothes and cots bedecked with gems. The king went near Srinivasa once again. The Lord stood up on seeing his father-in-law and said: "O king, why are you coming again? You are blessed by giving me your daughter in marriage. Is there any thing else you want? Kindly let me know." The king replied "I have become affluent as I am blessed by your grace, Kesava. I do not want anything. Grant me and my family steady devotion to your lotus feet". Sree Srinivasa granted merger (sayuj) in the Almighty to his father-in-law. He presented one of his own clothes to his brother-in-law also. Comforting his daughter Akasaraaja returned to his palace.

Sreenivasa accompanied by Padmavathi, Brahma, and Rudra reached River Suvarnamukhi. He stayed there for six months. He vowed not to ascend the hill during that period. So he resided at the hermitage of Agastya. He presented clothes and other suitable articles to the sages and gods and bade them good bye.

Goddess Lakshmi returned to Karaveerapura obtaining the Lord's permission. After all others departed, Padmavathi and Srinivasa remained at the hermitage of Agastya.

51. Death of Akasaraja

Six months elapsed. One day a messenger arrived at Narayanapuram from the capital of Akasaraja. Padmavathi enquired him about the welfare of her parents, Tondaman and citizens. Unable to control himself the messenger replied "What shall I say, mother? Your father is in his death bed. He desires to see you and Srinivasa. Kindly start at once along with your husband to see your father" On hearing the sad news Padmavathi fell down unconscious. She was lost in grief. Agastya's wife consoled her and took her to Sreenivasa. On receiving the news Vasudeva too gave way to grief, and said "What a calamity, my dear. What shall I do? Where shall I go? Tell me." He told Agastya that he would rush to Akasaraja along with Padmavati and Vakula. He then started. Agastya accompanied him. By sun-set they arrived at the main gate of Narayanapuram. They enquired the gate keeper anxiously about the king's health. They entered the king's private chamber where they saw him lying in his bed. Srinivasa also broke down along with his wife and others. He met his father-in-law and pressed him to his bosom. "Where are you going, my father? You had been the father of this orphan. How can your subjects live without you? Get up, father, and save us all" he said. Lamenting thus he remembered the last words of Akasaraja. "When I left you last, you asked me not to leave you. I did not comply with your request. Get up king: Look at me and Padmavathi" he grieved, "Your son-in-law has come along with your daughter, O king" said the sages. Srinivasa

while Akasaraja recovered slightly and entreated his son-in-law to take care of his brother, Tondaman and son Vasudana. He handed over those two physically to Venkateswara. After indicating to his wife about his last moment, Akasaraja breathed his last. Boarding a celestial aeroplane he left for Sytyaloka. His body was consigned to the fire by sages. "While sacred incantations were being recited the mortal remains of Akasaraja were consumed by the fire. All the obsequies and rites were duly performed. With the sixteenth day function they ended. Kasyapa, Atri, Bharadwaja, Viswamitra, Valmiki, and Bhrigu took part in the proceedings of the final day and returned to their hermitages. Srinivasa also returned to the hermitage of Agastya accompanied by Padmavathi

52. Tondaman and Vasudana Claim the Throne

After the demise of Akasaraja and departure of Srinivasa disputes cropped up in the state regarding succession to the throne. Tondaman claimed the throne as his. His plea was that as the younger brother of the deceased king he was the rightful successor. Vasudana, son of Akasaraja set up his claim on hereditary right. His contention was that by his personal strength and valour his father earned the kingdom and that Tondaman had nothing to do with it. Tondaman mustered his troops. Both the contestants collected their armies in the battle field near Narayanapuram. Before the battle was to be joined both claimants approached Sri Venkateswara for help. Srinivasa received both with honour. "In connection with the ensuing war, Govinda, between me and my paternal uncle I seek your help. I am an orphan. Kindly extend your help to me" prayed Vasudana, Tondaman also beseeched Srinivasa for help. The lord sought the advice of Padmavati. "My Lord" said Padmavathi "Your duty is to uphold the righteous cause". Sri Venkateswara then gave his conch and discus to Tondaman and left on his divine horse, Uchysrava, accompanied by Vasudana. Both parties marshalled their mighty forces in battle array.

On the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of Chitra month a fierce battle between Tondaman and Vasudana erupted. It was like the Kurukshetra war. Both forces vied with each other in exhibiting their strength. Srinivasa was hit. His horse

vathi witnessed the ghastly scene. She rushed to sage Agastya shouting. "What a disaster has befallen ! O Sage ! look at the Lord." Agastya replied "Those who do their duty unmindful of the time and place are the least effected by their deeds. Do not be worried about your husband. A woman should ofcourse be devoted to her husband. It is her primary duty. I think that a peaceful settlement between the two warring parties is praiseworthy." Padmavathi immediately got into a palanquin and went to the battle field. She was accompanied by Agastya. Approaching Srinivasa she rendered him aid by sprinkling cold water on his face and fanning. "My Lord, kindly get up" she entreated him sorrowfully. Srinivasa recovered. He got up. He looked around and beheld Padmavathi. "What business have you here in the battle field ?" he questioned her angrily. Agastya intervened and said. "Treaty is the only solution now. To avoid blood-shed she has come here. She is afraid of the consequences of the war." The Lord was angry at the presence of a woman in the battle field. "Women should not enter the battle field. O sage, I want to cut off Tondaman's head. I shall kill him and hand over the kingdom to Vasudana". With folded hands Padmavathi begged of her husband— "My Lord, Srinivasa be pleased to bestow your compassion. What is the outcome of a war ? Both parties are your own. Divide the kingdom and treasury between the two. That will save the world from disaster. By your graceful intension kindly avoid war.

Srinivasa then directed Padmavathi to with draw from the battle field. saying "You do not know the duties of a Ksatriya. I am going to do away with Tondaman and destroy all his forces. I am prepared even to die for my brother-in-law." Padmavathi requested Suka to use his good offices and avoid the

war. Agastya pacified Srinivasa. He advised him to divide the kingdom and treasury as proposed by Padmavathi. The Lord agreed. He sent for Tondaman and sounded him about the peace proposals and terms. Tondaman said "everything is left to you". Srinivasa sent for his brother-in-law. Vasudana came. "I am always prepared to obey the Lord" he said. The dominion and all the properties were partitioned equally between Tondaman and Vasudana, the two contestants. The discus and conch returned to the Lord.

Then Srinivasa demanded one sixteenth of the kingdom and property as his fee for the arbitration. Both the parties agreed to pay the fee. Three hundred and two villages were allotted to Srinivasa. Tondaman was installed as ruler of Tondaraj. Vasudana was anointed as king of Narayanapuram. After dining with Vasudana, Srinivasa and Padmavathi returned to the hermitage of Agastya.

53. Srinivasa wants a house

One day Tondaman went to see Srinivasa. The Lord received him and embraced him. He enquired about the purpose of his visit. "Just to pay respects to you, Govinda, I have come" said Tondaman. "Sages and holy men say that you are the Supreme Lord. Hearing that, I have come to see you. You are the creator, protector and destroyer of the Universe, so say the holy. You are the Almighty. Brahmins are born from your face. From your arms are born the Kshatriyas. From your thighs Vysvas and from your feet Sudras sprang up. You are the Lord of the entire Universe. Obeisance to you, Sri Venkateswara, Sri Krishna, Srinivasa. O Lord, with millions of bodies, heads and arms-Pranamam to you." Thus eulogised Tondaman. Pleased with him Srinivasa said "O king, those who pray to me with pure hearts reach my domain. Those who worship me also achieve that end. Akasaraaja attained liberation. Through him I have become famous on earth. He gave his daughter to me and was happy. Now he is no more. One has to reap the fruits of his sowings in his previous births- good or bad. I do not know how my buture will be". Tondaman said "why do you feel sorry remembering the deceased relations? One has to suffer for his past evil. Do not be worried, Govinda, about the king who left for Heavens. Take care of me and the boy." Srinivasa observed "Your brother made me a family man. But there is no house for me and your daughter to live. The son-in-law of Akasaraaja has to reside in a rented house. This is my worry. It is difficult to be a tenant for ever. Kindly provide a house for me. None except you can do this."

Tondaman promised to do the needful in the matter. At a propitious moment on an auspicious day, Sri Venkateswara ascended Seshasaila with his spouse. With the permission of Sri Varaha, a site south of Swami Pushkarini was identified by the Lord for his dwelling. Tondaman got two towers facing the east and three compound walls constructed. Seven gates with orchards and festoons and flag-post were constructed. A court hall, Mandapa for Yaga, cow-sled, grannary, store houses for cloths, oil, ghee, dining hall and a lovely temple were already there. Stables for horses and elephants also existed there already. "They were constructed by you already. Just improve them a bit, and make them appear brilliant" instructed the Lord. Tondaman was surprised. He desired to be enlightened by the Lord as to how and when he raised them already.

Srinivasa narrated to Tondaman about Gopinath and Rangadas and added "You were Rangadas previously, now you are Tondaman." Tondaman returned to his palace, caused investigations, about Swami Pushkarini, the lake referred to by Srinivasa. After identifying it he got a beautiful tall tower raised for the shrine with gold pinnacles. He laid approach roads to assist pilgrims, got steps constructed up the hill with Mandapas and provided drinking water facilities on the way.

54. Ananda Nilaya, The Abode of Bliss

After completion of the works proposed by Srinivasa, Tondaman reported the matter to Srinivasa and invited him to occupy the temple.

"I shall certainly do so," said Sri Venkatesa. He occupied it while eminent sages and learned brahmins chanted Mantras from Vedas, and the sound of trumpets, drums and bugles echoed. Every one sang the praise of Lord Sreehari. Gods and Gandharvas showered flowers on Srinivasa. Sages offered worship to Him with great joy. The main temple constructed by King Tondaman was named 'Ananda Nilaya. In it Srinivasa shone with splendour and radiance. As it was the source of joy, the shrine was named 'Ananda Nilaya'. Padma-vathi was installed in the Lord's chest by the Lord Himself.

Some time later the enemies of Tondaman invaded Tondaraj and vanquished him, Tondaman approached Venkateswara through an underground passage and sought his refuge. "Do not be afraid, O king, I shall spare my conch and discus to you. Use them. You will destroy your enemies" the lord said and granted the two celestial weapons to the king. Tondaman hit back and drove away his enemies. "You have granted me the divine weapons, my Lord. But one more prayer. Let them not adorn your icon in future" requested Tondaman. The lord agreed. Thereafter he never put on the two weapons on his icon. The two weapons Sargna and Dhanu were on either side of his but remaining invisible.

The Lord is there without the Chakra and the Sankha in his hands. His left hand is on his left hip. His right hand assures protection to one and all. Even to-day, Sri Venkateswara shines in the Ananda Nilaya in the same posture,

55. Brahma lights two lamps

Brahma lighted two lamps in the shrine for the welfare of the Universe and prayed to Sri Venkateswara thus: "Lord, grant that these two lamps shall shine till the end of Kaliyuga and that only on the day the Vimana collapses and the two lamps go off, your present incarnation shall end." The Lord granted the boon. He directed Brahma to celebrate annually his wedding with Padmavathi commencing from the flag hoisting and ending with the Car festival. "Brahmins, learned in Vedas should offer me various dishes as Nyvedya" the Lord instructed. Brahma sent for Tondaman. Tondaman arrived. "Get ready some wonderful vehicles (Vahanams) and wooden cars carved exquisitely. Get umbrellas and fans also ready," said Brahma. To him everything was got ready in no time. Vasudeva directed Brahma to invite the kings of all countries for the festival. Messengers were sent with invitations to the rulers of all the countries e.g. Magadha, Kalinga, Kambhoja, Kerala, Virata, Kuru, Barbarika, Andhra, Chydia, etc.,

All the invitees arrived, some on elephants, some on horse back, some in palanquins and some on foot. Several people thronged there. Some travelled fasting, some observed milk diet. All paths leading to Venkatachala were crowded. Every one brought some presentation article to the Lord. Many sages who were invited turned up. On the second day of the month of Kanya, the Lord's flag was hoisted.

On that day's procession, Brahma arranged Nara-yana, a chariot drawn by men and requested Srinivasa to get into it. The

Lord pointed out to Brahma : "You are still a child. You have forgotten, my boy. There is still something to be done. I have to test the competence of those who will conduct this festival." Brahma was taken aback. Srinivasa found out some lapses in the arrangements and soon got them set right. He himself took over the job and made all necessary arrangements for the festival. Delicious dishes of various varieties to be offered as Nyvedya were got prepared.

56. Brahmotsava Inaugurated

Tondaman made all preparations for the celebration of Brahmatsava. He sent for Vishwakarma. Vehicles, cars, and all necessary material and equipment were got ready. Sri Venkateswara instructed Tondaman to invite all the rulers. All the kings and invitees arrived with their families. Every one excluding yavanas and Chandalas arrived to take part in the festival. They were all votaries of Sreehari. Numerous presentations were offered at the feet of the Lord. The month of Kanya passed. The propitious date arrived.

Not only the kings but Gods, Pundits, people of all the four castes to whom invitations were issued arrived either by sea or land or air. People from all parts of the country also thronged at Venkatachala shouting 'Govinda' time and again, and saying "Srinivasa, whose vision, even Yogis cannot have will appear personally; let us all go". Elaborate arrangements were made enroute Venkatachala. Food and drinking water were supplied free. Everything necessary was made available to make the pilgrims comfortable. Dancing and singing the glory of Sri Venkateswara, all arrived at Venkatachala. There was a large concourse of devotees. Brahma made all the required arrangements for lodging and boarding of all the visitors. Viswakarma attended to the decorations on the hill. All cities, towns, villages on the ways leading to Venkatachala were decorated tastefully. Along the routes were to be seen courtezans, businessmen with heaps of pearls exposed for sale. Every one was rich. Everybody was righteous. All facilities were provi-

ded, Brahma made arrangements for the festival. Celestial musical instruments were played. Gandharvas and Apsaras took part in the recitals of music and dances. Viswakarma exhibited his talent and did his best. The city was converted into a city of Gandharvas.

The Icon of Srinivasa was installed as procession idol or Utsavamurti. Sri Venkatewara became the Moolamurthy, the primary Icon, the foremost of all the idols. The festival was celebrated taking out Srinivasa in a testeful procession. Several offerings were got ready. Rice with jaggery, milk, dhal, ghee, all sorts of fruits, rice with curds, Payasa, Laddus, Manoharam and many other dishes were offered to the deity. Brahma himself hoisted the flag following the rituals. The same evening, Anantha, Garuda, Brahma, and other Devatas and sages led by Vishwakseua went to the outskirts of the city and brought an elephant. Some good earth dug from an ant hill was brought. The festival commenced with great pomp and care, for the welfare of the universe. In the Yagasala, the hall where sacrifice is made also, all rituals were conducted and Poornakumbha was offered. Vyghanasas conducted the rituals. Pilgrims offered many things as charity on the festival day. Feeding, donation of gold, clothes, houses, were considered very meritorious on the sacred hill. The festival concluded with Avabhrit, the final bath and Pushpayaga.

On the day of the flag hoisting the deities were taken out in procession in a Palanquin. On the second day they were taken out in procession on the Seshavahanam, and Swan vehicle. On the third day they were taken on the Lion and pearl Mantapa

and on the fourth day the Kalpavriksha carried the deities in the procession. The Sarvabhoopala Vahanam also was used the same day. On subsequent days the deities were taken out on different vehicles as shown below :

Fifth day andolika (Palanquin)

Garuda, the Lord assuming the guise of Mohini

Sixth day—Hanuman, Mangalagiri and Elephant

Seventh day—Bhaskara, Mangalagiri - Lord going to the Park on the 'Moon Vahana'

Eighth day - Car and Horses

Ninth day - Palanquin and Mangalagiri.

The deities were taken out after being annointed with trumeric and red powder. The final bath was given on the last day when the deities were taken out on Mangalagiri and the idols were also taken round the shrine. The bath was given in the Swami Pushkarini. During the procession goddesses Sreedevi and Bhudevi were beside the lord. Brahma and other gods led the procession which passed through the important streets of Venkatachala and returned to the shrine. After the flag was lowered the Pushpayaga was celebrated. With his two consorts Sree Devi and Bhudevi the lord entered the court hall of his shrine which was nicely decorated. Seated in the throne, wearing his lustrous diadem he addressed Brahma thus :

"I am quite pleased with your devotions and service, Brahma. All of you kindly listen to me. Who-ever celebrates here my festival, Brahmotsava every year when the sun enters Virgo gets all his desires fulfilled on earth and ultimately reaches the realm of Brahma. Who-ever does anything helpful to the success of the festival gets rewarded both in this world

as well as the other. Feeding the pilgrims during the festival is highly commended. Those who feed the pilgrims achieve merit, not only for themselves but also for their future, and past generations. They reach my region in the end after enjoying in the heaven. Those who give food, clothes, gold etc., in charity to the infirm and invalid poor derive my pleasure easily. I grant them all prosperity and progeny. Liberation and Salvation which are difficult to achieve by knowledge also, are assured to such donors. Gift of any thing ordained by Shastras and scriptures ensures happiness in this world as well as in the other and also a place in my domain in the end. Who ever founds a village or town around the hill, attains Swarga after enjoying on the earth and reaches me finally. Who ever resides at this place thinking this to be a holy one on earth fit for dwelling for ever is assured a place in my domain. Any learned man who dwells on this hill and imparts good education to the deserving acquires renown. Not only he, but all his descendants for generations achieve similar merits.

57. Laying of parks and Gardens on Venkatadri

Sree Venkateswara continued to narrate the meritorious deeds that could be executed on Venkatachala thus: "Who so ever lays a beautiful park, garden, or Brindawan on the sacred hill enjoys in heaven for long and in the end reaches me. Children and grand children of such philonthrophists acquire immense merit. "Who so ever raises flower garden and offers it flowers for my daily worship and who so ever raises fruit garden and offer its fruits to me every day prospers in every way. Similarly any service rendered to me is rewarded well in this as well as the other world, from which there would be no return to the earth. Any one who offers any ornaments to me will have children well learned and long lived. Who ever offers Tulasi leaves or Lotus flowers with devotion for my Puja will have Lakshmi in his house. I will be pleased with them". So declaring Sree Venkateswara wanted all those present there to specify their desires. He promised to fulfil every one wish and assured: "Who ever dwells here shall be rid of all difficulties. Any one, Rakshas, Asura, or one who causes injury to any learned person will be annihilated by me. All his property also will be destroyed. Who ever, whether following any discipline or not, visits Swami Pushkarani, bathes in its waters and pays homage to me shall be blessed in every way". Thus saying the Lord entered the celestial Vimana with his spouses, There was a down pour

Referring to the Brahmotsava Brahma said "Previously I celebrated the festival of Sree Venkateswara in the brighter half of the month of Bhadrapada, when the moon was with the Star Chitra. In Kaliyuga also human beings celebrate the great festival. Lord Vishnu grants them all their desires and higher regions. Those who offer even simple worship in the month of Bhadrapada (September, October) are well rewarded."

58. The festival concluded

On the day when the Moon was in conjunction with star Sravana, the holy and purificatory bath was conducted to mark the end of Brahmotsava. In the sacred waters of Swami Pushkarini, Brahma, Gods, sages, Yogis and every one had purificatory baths. Sage Sanaka then announced before all thus :- "All of you, please listen to me. Here is a proclamation. Who ever has a holy dip in the sacred waters of Swami Pushkarini on the concluding day of the annual Brahmotsava gets all the sins of his previous births destroyed instantaneously." Lord Siva and Vishnu confirmed the proclamation. Other Gods sang the praise of the Pushkarini and offered worship to it with flowers, to the accompaniment of celestial music, and recitations from Vedas. Finally Gods and Brahma thanked Sri Venkateswara. "Brahma, I am very much pleased with you. How can I reward you? You are myself. I am your self. Let me know what else you desire" said Sri Venkateswara to Brahma. Brahma replied "I am really blessed, O Lord. I have only one desire. Be pleased to stay on here granting the wishes of your votaries. I pray to you again. Reside here and bless the world, Lord." "Be it so" said Sri Venkateswara. He permitted Siva, Indra and others to return to their respective realms and attend to their routine duties, Agastya and sages were requested to return to their hermitages and renew their penance and meditation. Sri Venkateswara then entered his celestial Vimana accompanied by his consorts. There was a heavy down pour of fragrant flowers. All Gods hailed the Lord.

60. The previous life of Akasaraaj:

Long long ago there lived a pious and rightetuous Br
min named Purandara in Kalahasthi. In his old age, he had a
whom he named Madhava. After getting educated Madh
married Chandralekha of Pandya region. Chandralekha
very devoted to her husband. One day Madhava wanted
wife to share his bed. But Chandralekha referred him to
scriptures which forbid sex during day time. Madhava, howe
insisted that his desire should be fulfilled irrespective of
injunctions in Sastras. Chandralekha devised a plan and told
husband:- "I shall be walking out of our house on the plea
going to get water. Follow me to the banyan tree, where we sh
meet." She went in advance. Madhava went later on. On
way he happened to see a lovely young lady, elegantly dress
He was captivated by her charm. Kuntala—that was the na
of the lady, was born of a low caste. She attracted Madhava
much that the Brahmin youth evaded his wife. He direc
Chandralekha to return home. Chandralekha returned hom
Madhava approached Kuntala and revealed his mind to h
"You are a brahmin. I am a low caste woman and a prosti
I eat mutton, you are a learned man. You should not even lo
at me. You must be a fool to entertain any evil thought' retor
Kuntala. She advised him not to come near him. But Madh
was not to be convinced like that. "Brahma has created you
a jungle without any meaning. I love you and you only" cont
ded he. "Diamonds are born in saltish seas. Yet on accou
of their brilliance they are accepted by Gods also. Let me go

wept and said, "Touch me not O brahmin. Vishnu created two sexes, namely males and females. Similarly four castes are created by him. You should love a woman born of brahmins. Why do you love me? Yours is a holy body. It should not be polluted by contacting my loath-some body. You are learned in Vedas. Your feet have become holy by your pilgrimage. You are of superior birth. Not only that. Love for other women led many to hell. I am fit to be your servant." But infatuated as he was Madhava did not listen. "By the merit I acquired in my past lives, I met you, young lady. I will die if I leave you" he went on arguing. "Save a man who is about to die" he beseeched Kuntala. Kuntala tried to escape. But Madhava pursued her. At last he satisfied his lust. "From this moment, you are my husband. Throw away your sacred thread and get your head cleanly shaved. Eat meat. Drink to day. Embrace chandalatwa," Kuntala demanded him. Madhava followed her instructions. Both lived as man and wife on the banks of River Krishna.

Twelve years elapsed. Kuntala passed away. Madhava lamented and wandered everywhere like a mad man. One day in the course of his roamings, he came to Varahachala. Some kings from the North were there on pilgrimage. Madhava saw them. He followed them. He ate the remains of their food. The kings performed shradha ceremony to their deceased ancestors near Kapila teertha. Madhava also bathed in the sacred teertha and offered balls made of mud as pindas as he had no rice or grain to offer. He was immediately relieved of his sins.

Any one who bathes in the sacred teerthas and offers balls of rice in memory of his deceased fore fathers, gets freed from sins. Even pindas of mud offered confer merit.

Early the next morning the kings went up the hill on foot and reached Seshagiri. Madhava followed them. When his body touched the sacred hill a fire shot up at the place. All his sins were reduced to ashes. The foul smell of the smoke created a stir in Gods. Seated on their vehicles they came down and found out the cause for such a pungent smell. They could know the reason. Then they showered flowers on Madhava. Brahma¹ touched Madhava's head and said "Madhava, you are now free from all sins. Bathe in the waters of Swami Pushkarini, pay obeisance to Lord Varaha and forsake this body of yours. You will be born as a king in the family of the grand children of Pandavas as son of Sudharma. You will be named Akasa, in the southern country, and be the king of Tondarajya. You will be the father of the divine mother, Lakshmi. The Almighty will be your son-in-law. At the end of your life, you will go to Vaikuntha." So blessed Brahma, who named the hill as "Venkatachala." 'VEM' means 'sin'. 'Katah' means 'burnt' away. One who sings the glory of the hill in the mornings achieves the merit equal to that acquired by pilgrimages to Ganga and the southern sea.

This is yet another legend relating to the previous birth of Akasaraaja and also Venkatachala.

61. Asthi teertha, The story of Kurma

The dead brought back to life

There was a brahmin named Kurma born in the Gotra of Vasishttha. He was on his way to river Ganga to immerse his deceased father's ashes in its waters. His wife, Mahalakshmi, and son Raghava accompanied him. Leaving them in the outskirts of the capital, Kurma met Tondaman and said to him: "I have heard from many that you are a good king. I have come to see you". Tondaman asked Kurma what he wanted. "My father died. I am going to Varanasi to immerse his ashes in the holy waters of the Ganga. My wife is in her family way. My son aged five is not able to accompany me. I shall leave them to your care. Kindly take care of them till I return. A woman should stay in the following places according to scriptures :

- 1) Husband's house 2) her birth place
- 3) her father's house, 4) father-in-law's house
- 5) Maternal uncle's house, 6) King's palace,"

Kurma said.

Tondaman agreed. Kurma left his wife and son with the king and proceeded to Varanasi.

The king allotted a separate building to Mahalakshmi and Raghava. He granted them provisions sufficient for six months. The building was suitably locked and kept under strict guard so that none could disturb the inmates. Afterwards Tondaman was deeply engrossed in state affairs. He forgot about Kurma's wife

Two years passed by. Kurma returned from Kasi. He met Tondaman and presented to him the holy waters of the Gonga. Tondaman was bewiladered on seeing Kurma. He felt like Ravana hit by Rama's arrow. He shivered in his sleeves.

Kurma enquired the king about his welfare and asked Dear king, when I left this place my wife was pregnant. What child did she deliver ?

How is my son ? I was always worried about him. He was interested in tanks and lakes. I was thinking about my family always."

Tondaman recovered from the shock and said : "Brahmin, be not worried about your son. Your wife delivered a female child. All are safe. Of late, I have not seen them. She has left for Venkatachala to witness the Lord's Abhisheka ast thursday along with some friends of my daughter." So assuring Kurma, Tondaman sent his son secretly, saying "Go to the house where Kurma's wife and son were. Bring the lady and her children here." The prince went there. There he could find some skeletons only. He shouted in horror that his family was sure to perish. He returned to his father and said: "Father, the time for the destruction of our family has come. Both the brahmin lady and her children died of starvation." Tondaman did not reveal this to Kurma. He arranged provisions for Kurma and went to Seshachala with his son. He burst into tears and caught hald of Sri Venkateswara's feet. "How is it king, you have come at an odd hour? Why are you weeping? You are a brave one and a peerless bow-man" questioned Srinivasa.

Tondaman did not answer. Srinivasa could, however,

tted by you has been done. What shall I do now? A wrong has been committed by you. Yet I am the sinner ever plunged in woes. Your devotion to me is unquestionable. I am prepared to do the necessary- People say that by my grace everything is possible. Send your son and get all the bones of the dead" he said. Tondaman sent his son to collect and bring the bones of Kurma's wife and children. The prince brought them wrapped in a cloth and reported the matter to his father who was on Seshagiri.

Tondaman beseeched Srinivasa to save him by bringing the dead to life. The Lord bundled up the bones in his upper cloth and went to Pandu teertha located east of Swami Pushkarini. There he dug a small pond. Leaving the king and his son, he entered the waters of the teertha, neck deep, keeping the bones on a stone on the bank of the teertha. He brought some water with his hands cleaned, and touched the bones. The wife and children of Kurma were immediately brought back to life. The gods showered flowers on the teertha. They called it as "Asthi Teertha". Every one was amazed at the miraculous power of its waters.

Bones of any dead, whether the dead had gone to hell or elsewhere, if immersed in this teertha lead the dead to heaven.

The Lord then asked Kurma to accept his wife and children. Kurma accepted and enquired his wife where she was all these days.

Srinivasa told Tondaman me great help. Your brother has done me a great favour. What I have done is nothing

Speak through others only. You better return to your capital and rule the Kingdom well. You will have no foes. Live very happily."

Kurma asked his wife to narrate her experiences "How shall I describe, my dear?" the lady said. "I was in the Lord's belly, seeing several worlds. Gods, nature and what not!" The boy also described all he saw. "the seven oceans, forests, mountains, Gods, demons, we saw" he said. Kurma felt ashamed of his bad luck. He wore a sad face.

"Off with my penance, down with my study of Vedas. I could not have the fortune of seeing the wonderful Universe and the Gods", he felt.

The king returned to his city. He wondered about the good luck of the brahmin's family. He praised the glory of Sri Venkateswara and the 'Asthi teertha' and pondered over as to how best he could serve the Lord. He sought the advice of the learned brahmins and preachers. Brihaspathi said :

"Worship Srinivasa with one thousand Tulasi petals, reciting his thousand names. The Lord likes Tulasi. Lord Venkateswara will be pleased. He will manifest himself before you." The king got one thousand golden Tulasi leaves set with gems and worshipped the Lord's feet with them. The worship was carried on for three months. Even then the Lord was not pleased.

"Forgive me, my evil deeds, my Lord. Have mercy on me. You are the only God, Vasudeva" implored the king. The Lord's voice was heard from the heavens thus :- "There are many devotees in the world. but none like you, O King! You have killed a brahmin woman and her son. How can you get rid of the sin?"

Tondaman was however proud of his devotion. "Who else is there in the three worlds, a devotee like me?" he questioned. Hari, "I am the foremost of your votaries, just as you are among the kind hearted" he added.

Sri Venkateswara kept quiet listening to the king's self approbation. Tondaman continued to worship the Lord offering golden Tulasi leaves set with diamonds.

62. Bhima, the potter

One day Tondaman saw some earthen and black Tulasi leaves on the golden ones he placed at the Lord's feet. Another day he noticed earthen flowers on the Lord's feet and the golden ones he offered thrown at a distance.

"My Lord, why are you ignoring me, an orphan? Who that greater votary, who has worshipped you with the earthen leaves?" so saying Tondaman began to weep. Srinivasa then pronounced :

"There are many votaries of mine. Among them is a poor devotee named Bheema, a potter. He dwells about four miles north from here. He has been offering worship to me with great devotion daily. He places earthen Tulasi flowers on my feet after bath. Pleased with his devotion, I accept his offerings. Better go and see him. There are several ardent devotees mine. You have bragged that you were the only votary of mine."

Tondaman was stung to the quick. He rushed to the house of Bhima. Near its entrance he fell down on the ground. Knowing the incident Bhima came out of his house exclaiming:

"What grave sin did I commit to get this punishment from you? Here is the king fallen on the ground. I am ever all a potter, supplying pots to the deity". Bhima wondered. Tondaman asked him mildly: "Where is that great votary,

At that moment Sri Venkateswara accompanied by Lakshmi manifested himself before Bhima. Overwhelmed with joy Bhima invoked the Lord thus :

"O Lord, You reside in Vykuntha. Your consort is the daughter of the Ocean. Brahma was born from your navel. A low born potter I am. How can I serve you ? The holy Ganga springs from your feet. Sesha, the thousand headed is your couch. Your vehicle is Garuda, the eagle. The stars are your teeth. The lustre of your body shines like lightning.

Your bones are the great mountains, the Meru and Himachalas.

Your eyes are the Sun and the Moon

You are the Universe, O Lord.

I seek refuge in you, O Almighty.

How wonderful you are !"

When thus Bhima sang the praise of Sri Venkateswara the Lord directed Garuda to bring the Lulala nearer him. Bhima went near the Lord and prostrated himself before him. "Lord, what for have you come over to this poor man's house ? I am neither Vidura nor Sabari. Neither am I Gajendra nor Vibheeshana. What is there in this poor man's house to offer to you" he beseeched. Tamalini, Bhima's wife implored the Lord thus :

"O Lord, Govinda, my mind always dwells in you. I know not mantras. I know not rituals, I am a low caste woman but devoted to you. The food cooked by me with rice is here. Kindly accept it".

The Lord smiled and looked at his consort and said to Tamalini "Give me the food. I shall eat whatever is offered

with devotion by you". Sreenivasa and Lakshmi heartily ate the food offered by Bhima and his wife.

Bhima could recollect the Lord's promise to him long ago that the moment Tondaman and he met he would go to /ykuntha. Soon a celestial plane arrived. Bhima and his wife got onto it after prostrating before the Lord, Sreenivasa, and assuming celestial forms. Sreenivasa presented to the potter devotees his own weapons and jewels of his consort. The two devotees ascended to the realm of Sreenivasa with their human bodies.

Tondaman stood gazing at the potter and his wife and wondering at their good fortune.

63. The story of Krishna Sarma

In the Bhavishyottara Purana the story of Kurma is narrated. A similar story finds place in Brahmanda purana also. Briefly it is this :

After Tondaman performed the Brahmotasava of Sree Venkateswara, one day, a brahmin named Krishna Sarma, from the south approached him with his wife and child. The king received the brahmin with due respect and enquired about the purpose of his visit. Krishna Sarma gave an account of his own life to the king and said "this is my wife Sudharmini. This boy is my son. I want to go on pilgrimage to Varanasi leaving these to your care". Tondaman agreed. He allotted a house to Sudharmini and her son and instructed them not to leave the house without his knowledge. He provided necessary provisions to feed them for six months. Krishna Sarma left on pilgrimage. He returned after some time and met the king with a request to hand over his wife and son to him. Tondaman was perplexed. He forgot all about Sarma's wife and son ever since they were entrusted to him. He thought that both would have by now perished as the provisions he supplied would not suffice so long. He found out the fate of the poor woman and her son. Alas ! Both died of hunger some time ago. The king did not, however, inform Krishna Sarma the fact. He said "Dear Sir, Your wife and son are quite safe. They had gone to offer worship to the almighty after obtaining my permission. I will send for them. Please wait". Tondaman then went to Seshadri immediately. With folded hands he stood before Lord Venkateswara and

implored him to come to his rescue. "I gave a false account to the brahmin, My Lord. I have none also except you, You must save me" so saying the king stood silently before Sri Venkateswara. Bhagavan Venkateswara consoled Tondaman. He instructed Vishwakshena to bathe the skeletons of the deceased woman and child in the waters of the lake called Asthikota situated on Seshadri. Vishwakshena did accordingly. Soon Sudharmini and her son were brought back to life. Sri Venkateswara narrated to Tondaman the glory of Seshadri and added that even Brahma was not aware of it. "Seshadri is one which fulfills all the desires of any one". the lord said. He asked Sudharmini to say if she had any specific desire. The pious lady answered "Grant me Lord that I may have the greatest devotion to you for ever". The request was conceded immediately by the Lord. Brahma, Sanaka and other Yogis arrived to witness the wonder. "There is no one equal to this brahmin" said the Lord to the king. He will be born as a great scholar and in the end he will reach my abode" concluded the Lord.

Tondaman arranged for the journey of Krishna Sarma and his family to their home. From then onwards Tondaman used to visit Sri Venkateswara daily and offer worship to him more devotedly.

64. Deva Sarma, Devotee of Vishnu

Deva Sarma, an ardent votary of Lord Vishnu, was a disciple of VAYU. Devoid of ego he was detached to the worldly things. He was extremely poor. Yet he did not worry very much about his family and its needs. One day, his wife explained to him the state of his family affairs and her inability to maintain it. She advised him to go to Lord Srinivasa and pray to him for help. She assured him that the Lord would be pleased and show mercy on him if approached. Devasarma was reluctant in the beginning to follow his wife's advice. He hesitated to approach the Almighty with requests for material prosperity as they would hinder his spiritual progress. Vayu his preceptor luckily arrived then and advised Devasarma to go on pilgrimage.

"Your desires will be fulfilled, whether material or spiritual. Lord Lakshmiipathi is compassionate. Proceed quickly. Do not delay. Go with full devotion." Vayu instructed Devasarma.

"The instructions of a Guru should be followed. They should never be violated" thought Deva Sarm. He proceeded to Seshachala and entered the shrine of Sri Venkateswara and paid homage thus :—

"Salutations to you, Lord Padmanabha, Ocean of compassion, All pervading, Salutations to your lovely feet. None, Not even Brahma, Indra or Sesha can know the glory of the nail of your little toe even. All gods administer their functions as directed by you, They all worship you, O Lord of Seshachala,

bow to your lotus feet. Ocean of mercy, obeisance to you in and again. O Lord Padamanabha, Brahma born from a lotus, salutes you. You wear lotus garlands. Your eyes resemble lotus petals. Your feet are like lotus. You dwell in the lotus petals of every one. I salute your lotus feet.

The glory of your feet is beyond description. Lord, you are infinite. You are Trivikrama. The divine lady, Sri, your consort looks always at the charm of the last toe of your feet. Always engaged in singing your praise, and immersed in bliss. Your son, four faced Brahma, sings the praise of your glory always out of devotion for you. The thousand headed Sesha, learned in scriptures, admits his inability to understand the beauty of your feet. All gods appointed in their offices enjoy their privileges on account of you and worship you, O Lord of Lakshmi. No one is able to eulogise your glory. Who can describe you and your glories?

The charm of your lotus feet is exquisite. Goddess Lakshmi, seated in your heart, looks at the enchanting beauty of your feet. She herself is infatuated on looking at your feet. Unable to see you with her two eyes, she has transformed herself into two forms-as Sreedevi on the right side, Bhudevi on the left and Neela.

She is not contented even after seeing you with six eyes. The four headed Brahma is engaged in beholding your charm with his eight eyes, day and night. Considering that eight eyes are inadequate, he had assumed different forms. He has become a lotus, the celebrated gem, worn by you on your breast. He is always enjoying the beauty of your lotus feet always.

The thousand Sesha, your couch is proud of his

I bow to your lotus feet. Ocean of mercy, obeisance to you again and again. O Lord Padamanabha, Brahma' born from a lotus, salutes you. You wear lotus garlands. Your eyes resemble lotus petals. Your feet are like lotus. You dwell in the lotus hearts of every one. I salute your lotus feet.

The glory of your feet is beyond description. Lord, you are infinite. You are Trivikrama. The divine lady, Sri, your consort looks always at the charm of the last toe of your feet desirous of singing your praise, and immersed in bliss. Your son, the four faced Brahma, sings the praise of your glory always out of affection for you. The thousand headed Sesha, learned in Vedas, admits his inability to understand the beauty of your nails. All gods appointed in their offices enjoy their privileges on account of you and worship you, O Lord of Lakshmi. No one is able to eulogise your glory. Who can describe you and your qualities?

The charm of your lotus feet is exquisite. Goddess Lakshmi, seated in your heart, looks at the enchanting beauty of your feet. She herself is infatuated on looking at your feet. Unable to see you with her two eyes, she has transformed herself into three forms-as Sreedevi on the right side, Bhudevi on the left and as Neela.

She is not contented even after seeing you with six eyes. The four headed Brahma is engaged in beholding your charm with his eight eyes, day and night. Considering that eight eyes were inadequate, he had assumed different forms. He has become Chowstubha the celebrated gem, worn by you on your breast. He enjoying the beauty of your lotus feet always.

The thousand Sesha, your couch is proud of his position near you. He feels that he is most fortunate. He is

reluctant to go either to Vikuntha or Kaivalya leaving you. He has more bliss near you. He has decided not to leave you ever. So he has also taken up residence on Venkatachala. Lord Sankara feels. "Alas I have three eyes only. How fortunate is Sesha who is blessed with one thousand eyes ! I shall endeavour by penance to be born as Sesha in my future birth." So thinking he left for Kailasa. The thousand eyed Sesha feels that he had not experienced such a pleasure by consuming nectar as he has by gazing at your feet.

"Indeed - Beauty is not appreciated by those who are near it. So the residents of Swarga who have their eyes always open desire to occupy my place" - feels Sesha.

Thus the celestials also long to look at your feet and the lines in them always. Why think of others then ? Lord Vishnu, the glory of the lines in your feet purifies the world. I implore you, pardon me, my short comings. Salutations to you, embodiment of knowledge, bliss, affluence and wealth. Stars and particles of dust can be counted. But your powers can never be estimated by Brahma or Lakshmi even. However, I, being the servant of the servants of your votaries and being inspired by your devotees, sing your praise as I desire. Lord of Venkatachala, the Universe is your family. Save me, O ocean of knowledge, bliss and compassion.

You are the master of truth. You are devoted to truth. Your volition is truth. You are truth. You are the source of truth. Your conduct is truth; you are the head of truth. I adore you. By listening about you all sins are effaced. By reflecting on you one's merit increases manifold. By meditating on you everything is achieved.

A vision of yours leads to salvation. I pay obeisance to you, Lord Venkateswara. You destroy everything undesirable

and bestow all things desirable. Brahma and other gods attain their posts by your look through a fraction of the corner of our eye. Srinivasa, king of kings, I worship you always. You are known by Vedas only. You are an ocean of merits. You have no defects. You are beyond the reach of senses. You are ever liberated.

By remembering you, all faults are annihilated. In hearing about you, all desires are fulfilled. By seeing you liberation is assured. O Lord, you sleep on the serpent. The universe is your couch. Lord of Seshadri, you are without end. I pay reverence to you always.

You are Vishnu. You are tranquility personified. You are compassionate to your devotees. Your face is pleasing. You are benignant. I worship you always. Your lotus feet are surrounded by your votaries' devotion. Sanaka and other holy sages seek you as their ultimate goal. I pay homage to you Lord Srinivasa. Your feet are the birth place of River Gaaga and other Sacred Rivers. O holder of the conch, and discus, I worship you always. Assurer of fearlessness, I bow before you. You dwell on the banks of River Suvarnamukhi and grant wealth to your devotees. Your golden marks are gold coloured. Srinivasa, I always worship you. Lord of Lakshmi, wear the jewel, Sreevatsa, wealthy Lord, the source of all wealth. I adore you always. Lord, you reside in Vykuntha.

O brother of Indra, Lord, you assure your devotees a place in Vykuntha. Your knowledge is limitless. You are the unity in one. I pay reverence to you always. Lord, you assumed the body of the fish to recover Vedas from the ocean. Srinivasa, you are the truth and saviour of the truth, I pray to you always. You assumed the body of a tortoise to rescue Mountain; Mandara

became a white boar and recovered with your tusks earth from the bottom of the ocean. Srinivasa, I honour you always. You became a man-lion, Lakshminarasimha, and vanquished the demons and saved your votary, Prahlada. I worship you always. You became Vamana a dwarf and punished Bali, the king of demons. You became Bhargavarama with moon like face and lovely teeth and destroyed the wicked king. You incarnated as Sreerama, attained world renown and killed the ten headed demon, Ravana.

You were born in Yadava family as Vasudeva- Krishna, son of Devaki and became saviour of the World. Lord, dark blue-hued son of Yasoda, you dwelt in Brindavan and reared cows as Lord of Gokula and enchanted the Universe. Great sages and saints sing your praise.

You stole the celestial Parijatha, the tree of paradise. You stole the hearts of Gopis along with their clothes. You killed Kamsa, the wicked. You destroy Samsara, dispell doubts. You are the Universal preceptor.

I worship you always. You were Buddha, the wise. You will be Kalki and destroy Kali and grant prosperity to every one. I adore you always.

Oh ! Hari, Krishna, Narahari, Anantha, Hrishikesa, Yagna, Kapila, Rishabha, Hayavahana, Nara, Vyasa, Narayana, the sinless, the supreme Self Dattatreya, Dhanvanthari, the Lord with limitless bodies, numerous achievements, innumerable names, the supreme Lord with infinite powers, immense valour, the Lord whom Vedas only can describe, Oh ! omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.

Lord with infinite number of eyes, feet, the all powerful,
can grant infinite welth and immense happiness, I pray to
u always.

Lord, Sri Venkatesa, you are Proficient in granting all
shes. If not, why are you residing on the lofty peak of
nkatachala? Your virtues are numerous. Your necklaces are
ttering. You relieve sinners of their sins, if only they remem-
you. You grant the desires of all your devotees; you put
a smiling face always; you are always accompanied by
shmi. Lord Venkateswara, I prostrate myself before you.

Lord, if I take refuge in your feet, I would be seeking
age in every holy lake. Lakshmi, Brahma, Siva, Esvara,
ha, Indra, Sun, Moon, Agni all worship you.

Lord, Srinivasa, you Purify the universe. I salute your
y feet which bestow prosperity and are realised by sages, gods,
shmi and Vedas only. I pay obeisance to you, O Supreme!
g, four armed Vishnu, you destroy the evil doers. You are
able of rescuing people from the Ocean of nescience and
bling the good to become wise. You are worshipped by
as. You remove poverty, sorrow and sins. You destroy all
mitics.

You are the only one above the Universe, the only one
remains at the end. O Supreme Purusha, my patron dietye
ay to you. I bow before you. The sacred Ganga is bor-
n your feet. Brahma Siva, Indra and Ravi seek the Grace
our feet. Your name relieves sins and assures salvation.

The Sun and the moon are your eyes.

You are the primary friend of all.

You are the salvation of all.

Vedas add Saraswathi, Narada and Sesha sing your praise always. Sankara is your servant. You are full of compassion. Those who sing your glory achieve all virtues. Those who are proud and abandon you go to hell. For such people the earth itself is hell.

You are under the control of your devotees. You destroy calamities of your votaries and grant them prosperity. You are adored by the universe. In every birth of mine let me adore you. In order to bless your votaries, you have come down to the small earth. You relieve the sine of human beings who think of you. Even Saraswathi cannot comprehend your inner mine. You are an expert in assuming any body. Your form are infinite; your stories are limitless. I picture to my self your glory with devotion. You grant all prosperity on earth and in heaven. Why talk of small favours? I seek refuge in you, Lord of the Universe, the most exalted Supreme Lord. I have to my credit some merit from my previous lives. I have your Grace. Why should I fear?

From you are born all creatures. By you they are nurtured and live by your compassion, In you they merge finally. Such an Almighty you are. I seek refuge in you, O light of the Universe-You are seen by Yogis. You are heard from the Vedas. Yet, you are not seen by any"

Devasarma then went on describing the glory of the Almighty's body and ended his prayer thus: "Sree Venkatesa, embodiment of knowledge, bliss and kindness, be pleased to hear my entreaty. Your face is the birth place of Brahmins. Your arms are the source of Kshatriyas, Your thighs of the Vysyas, and our feet of the Sudras. Your head is the sky. From your head the thousand rayed sun was born. From your face were

born Indra, Agni, and other Rulers of the eight corners. From your mind the Moon was born. From your Prana is born Vayu. Anthariksha sprang from your navel. The Earth was born from your feet. The fourteen worlds were born from your limbs. The Brahmanda, supported by Brahma, arose from your tender navel. Lord of Illusion, you are free from Illusion. But you control it and you destroy it. Lord, I crave your protection.

Reverence to you again and again. You are beyond reason and also within it. You have a body. Yet you do not have it. You are infinite. You are the embodiment of everything known and unknown. You grant all accomplishments, O best of the Gods. I am inspired by you. I am the devotee of your feet. What is there for me to represent to you? Gods and kings pray to your feet for protection. You are the protector of all. I am under the influence of desires. Where else can I go? Lord Venkateswara, you wear golden clothes, gem-set diadem and charming ornaments. I salute you. O Moon-faced lord, who is in the Vimana, Brahma and all gods are at your service. You are kind to your devotees. You ride the eagle. Garuda stands on your flag. You wear yellow silk robes. Lakshmi is always with you. You wear the Kasuthubha jewel and hold the discus. You assure fearlessness to your devotees. You are seen, yet unseen.

You are heard, yet unheard.

You are speech and you are silence.

You are within expression and also beyond it.

You are victory, you are conquest.

You are lust, but without it.

Brahma and gods want to be at your feet always.

Who can witness your glory? I desire to have your

You are God of gods, Vasudeva, the primeval Purush the Omnipresent. Obeisance to you, you are nigher than the Supreme, pre-eminent, unmanifested, the subtle, all pervading spirit, the cause of the Universe and the Supreme spirit. I salute you, Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna, Anirudha, Lord, who resides in the hearts of Yogis, who created the five elements, pay obeisance to you.

Master of knowledge, senses and lust, Hrishikes Vishnu, Lord of Vishnavas, Triumphant Lord, bestower of Victory, Krishna.

I pay homage to you. You are the achievement of the ends and aims of human beings. Any number of pilgrimages, Yagnas, charities, Vratas, cannot acquire a fraction of the merit achieved by your votary who chants your name with devotion. The sins of any one, who recites your sacred names will be reduced to ashes. Any one, suffering from hunger, sorrow or fatigue, gets rid of those sufferings if he recites your name. All sins and ills vanish from any one who recollects you.

Pilgrimages, Yagnas, donations, penances, religious austerities, all such are unnecessary.

Worshipping other deities is uncalled for, if one seeks your praise, Lord Srinivasa.

This is the royal road to prosperity- You are the master of all perishable and non-perishable. Obeisance to you O God, Siva, Superhuman power, O brave and courageous, embodiment of Trinity, O mighty Lord, Supreme soul, I salute you Lord, Narayana, saviour of all, worthy of worship, Achyuta.

O Siva, propitious Lord, pervaded by Rays, Skanda, Sat, Chit, Ananda, personified, Karma and knowledge embodied receptacle of Srutis and Smrutis, I pay reverence to you. O Yuma, controller of all, restrainer of every one, Donor and inspirer of religious austerities and observances, Object of penance and three kinds of miseries,

O Sacrifice, Universe Lord of Universe, Auspicious Lord, Gaaga sprang up from your feet. O Saviour, pleasing Lord, bestower of Prosperity, the pure and perpetual holder of virtues, I salute you. O divine artisan united with action, bestower of knowledge, knowledge you are over liberated, Hara, you are the bestower of perpetual liberation I pay obeisance to you. Lord of Lakshmi, ocean of mercy, grantor of pure body, Yoga, vast properties, mind which knows the real nature of the supreme soul, sincere devotion, detachment, other good qualities and heaven, I salute you, Vishnu. You are easily attainable, yet difficult to achieve. I salute you. Govinda, the sinless, destroyer of sins. You are above heaven, you are great wish yielding tree in every age.

Any one influenced by carelessness or intoxication or one who speaks untruth or commits any sin like murder of a brahmin, - if he utters your blessed name, even by pride or ignorance, his sins are reduced to ashes. How fortunate are the followers of the name of Vishnu ! Yamaloka is far away from them. The glory of Vishnu's name is beyond description. Who can describe it ? Ajamila was liberated from the clutches of death and went to Vaikuntha. {Vishnu's name alone is the great Dharma for humanity. It is its only saviour. By uttering Sri Hari's name Ajamila was saved from all sins. Prahlada, Gajendra and other devotees were also saved from calamities by uttering the divine name. By chanting your name continuously, Shiva and by medi-

tating on it Lord, Prajapathi attained prosperity. The Almighty's name removes all difficulties. It is supreme power. It is omnipresent. O Lord, all powerful, have mercy on me. I pray to your feet for compassion. You have no name or form. Yet you assume names and forms. Lord, obisance to you. Have pity on me. A mere look of yours confers prosperity in this as well as other worlds.

"OM NAMO VENKATESAYA, PURUSHAYA, MAHA-TMANE, MAHANUBHAVAYA, MAHAMAYINE AMEYA KARMANE"

OM, Salutations to you, Venkatesa, eminent and supreme Spirit, glorious, virtuous, master of illusion soul of the Universe, boundless artisan. Any one can overcome his difficulties if he chants your name. If any one in riches forgets you, all his wealth vanishes. I am enamoured of your name always by your inspiration and grace. My merit depends on your mercy. I am ever engaged in chanting your name. Why should I fear? Yet, Lord, let an iota of your grace be showered on me. Evil minded people can not know you. You are the knower of all. Kindly save me. One who is pure in mind and deed is dear to you. By action-(KARMA) knowledge is gained. You are pleased with those who acquire it. Your name confers greater merit than any charity or donation of cows or feeding millions on the bank of RIVER Ganga daily. Where all people are devotees and chant your name can there be any calamity? The God of death of his messengers can not touch such people. Laxmi, the mother of Universe is seated in your heart. She is worshipped by Brahma and Sankara. She grants prosperity to all. She is free from all sins, ever liberated and has all virtues. She is engaged in offering worship to your feet always. She is the wish yielding tree of all her votaries. She is Chintamani, the philosopher's stone, the

Kamadhenu the celestial Cow, and ocean of kindness. She is omni-prestnt. She creates and preserves Universe and liquidates sins.

Lakshmi as Gayatri, saves those who sing her praise. As goddess Savita, she grants the desires of devotees. As Savitri and also Kamala. Being the ruler of Word and Speech, she is called Saraswathi. She has many other names such as Bharathi. She guides everyone. By her grace all prosperity is achieved; Devotion, liberation and detachment are obtained. She is all powerful and bestower of everything. She is worshipped by all. When divine beings pray to her and meditate on her, what about lower creatures ?

O Sri Venkateswara, my Lord, Ocean of knowledge, bliss and mercy, saviour of those who seek refuge in you, when Rudra and other Gods could not describe your glory—how can I ? Your forms and deeds are beyond description and beyond contemplation by Vedas. What about me ? What about my capacity ? I am not endowed with such a brain that can describe you. I am proud, arrogant and an idiot. I have no knowledge or devotion. I am full of lust and anger. I covet worldly objects. Limitless are my sins. Numerous are your good qualities. Pardon me. You are my father, mother, preceptor, friend and everything. You are my patron deity and fore fathers. In short you are my all. I know none except you. Eradicate my evil recollections, less that I remember you always. There is none dear to me as you. My mind is always directed towards you. My life is in you. I seek refuge in your lotus feet. I am your devotee and disciple; son and servant. You are the Lord of Universe. I remember you day and night. O Srihari, dwell in my heart, seated in lotus posture shine like a Sapphire. The bottoms of your feet

are beautiful, red in colour, with Vrija Ankusa, Dhawaja etc., engraved. Your anklets are decorated with ornaments which sound melodiously. Your body shines like a hemp. The three lines on your belly are smooth. They conceal the Universe inside. Dharma is the front of your body. Adharma is your back. The hairs on your body are fine. Your shoulders are broad and elevated. Your hands touch your knees. They hold the discus and conch and have beautiful ornaments. Your ribs are like bimba fruits. Your teeth exhibit smile. Your cheeks are lovely. Your nose is charming. Your eyebrows are beautiful. Your eyes reflect your kind heart. Your face is like a full moon. Your hair is black. Your diadem is lustrous. Every limb of your body is enchanting. You shine like one million suns. You are cool like a million moons. Any number of Vedas or Brahmas can not understand you. Brahma, Rudra and Indra offer worship to you and your consorts. You are complete bliss, knowledge and compassion personified. You are supreme auspiciousness. Your body is all propitious. You grant auspiciousness to your votaries. While you glance at me with compassion, how can I be sorry? You are there to dispel all my difficulties. Faith in your feet fulfils all desires. Contemplating thus, day and night, I have sought refuge in you. Lord, you have all desires fulfilled. You are the Lord of wealth and supremacy. You assume any form. For the good of the Universe You take up any righteous cause. You saved many mountains and created oceans easily. The creation is in your tender and small belly by your clever strategem. The Universe is a family. You bear its weight. Have compassion on me, a small creature. Extend an iota of your kindness to me. Lord, Srivenkateswara, the merciful. You vowed to save your votaries. Why don't you look at me? I am in the world, a wilderness. I salute your lotus feet.

Forgive my faults and short comings, express or otherwise. Grant me boon that I may be devoted to your feet always. Grant me knowledge that leads me to happiness in this as well as the next world. O lord rambling in the lovely Mantapa in Swetha Dweepa in the sacred waters of Swami teertha along with Shri and Bhudevi, grant me salvation."

Shus Devasarma sang the praise of Sri Venkateswara and remained silent. Lord Srinivasa was pleased with his prayers and said :

"I am pleased with you, O the best of the brahmins, by your good prayers and sincere worship. Blessed are you. Be not worried about this world or the next. Blessed by me, my devotees, get freed from their difficulties- You are my votary. In your house there will plenty of wealth always. Your children and grand children will have longevity. After enjoying the worldly life for hundred years, you will reach my realm." He then disappeared.

Lord Venkateswara is under obligation to his votaries. He is delighted on seeing his devotees. So all should go to him, prostrate before him, and sing his praise with utmost devotion. All their desires will be fulfilled. The Lord's legends are beloved to Gods and sages. They enhance their merit and wealth and destroy their sins. They enhance the devotion in human beings. Lord Venkateswara, The Lord is gratified by his devotee's prayers. He grants all their desires and final beatitude from the moment of devotion.

There is no place equal to Venkatachala. There is no one equal to Sri Venkateswara in the past and present. There is no god equal to him in future also in the entire universe. The glory of Venkatachala has no parallel. Pollution has no place in Venkatachala. Recitation of Venkateswara's name is all gifts.

65. Sri Venkateswara in the Kali age

Having decided to stay on Venkatachala, Sri Venkateswara preferred to be silent. He would appear to human beings as Icon to be worshipped. As the Vimana which brought him to earth from Vykuntha returned to its original abode, a new one was raised in Kaliyuga. In the Kaliyuga, the Lord sees every thing. Yet he appears as 'not seeing anything'. He does not speak with any one. Yet, he continues to be powerful. He will be the bestower of more boons. By having his Darsan, everybody's sins will be annihilated. The Lord accepts any worship, simple or grand. He continues to sport with Lakshmi and exhibit his miracles. Any gift, or worship, however small, if made with devotion pleases him. Even if any one remembers him he is pleased. He enchants everyone with his illusion. Many festivals are celebrated for the Lord. Many dishes are offered to him. Unseen by human beings, Gods and celestial beings visit Venkatachala. They bathe in the Swami Pushkarini and offer Nyvedya to the Lord and eat its remains. They see the Vimana and pray that they be born as human beings. The Lord grants their wishes also. He is pleased with any good deed and blesses the donor with all prosperity. Gods also exclaim "What a blessed Lord is Venkateswara". The Lord's fame spreads in Kaliyuga more and more. His presence with Lakshmi would be felt more. Mlecchas and low born also would be highly devoted to Sri Venkateswara.

The Lord blesses them also, and fulfills their wishes. People from all countries congregate in great numbers to witness

the Lord's festival. Sri Venkatachala, though a mountain of gold would appear to be an ancient hill only. Converts to other religions also would be devoted to Sri Venkateswara and get purified. On seeing other devotees they will become Lord's devotees. They seek refuge in him. Lord Sreesa resides in Venkatachala in the Kali age. So, Kali age is good. Devotion to Sree Venkateswara is the best. There is no protector other than Venkateswara. There is none in whom one could seek refuge on earth. There is no God equal to Venkateswara on earth. There is no equal to Swami Pushkarini. In Kaliyuga, the Lord earns-huge wealth everyday, though he is never enamoured of anything any day. He indicates.

"Give me your wealth. Whatever you can all.

Here am I to grant your aspirations all."

Even a million years are not adequate to narrate Sri Venkateswara's glory and recite his story.

66. Padma Sarovara- Sree Lakshmi Manifests

Having left Vykuntha, Sree Lakshmi reached Patala. She was worshiped by sages there. Kapila built a temple for her. Lakshmi stayed there for a long time. Meanwhile Vishnu wandered in search of her. He went from place to place and arrived at Kolhapuri. There even he could not find her. He found an icon of Lakshmi there. He stayed at Kohalapuri for ten years. Later on, one day he heard a heavenly voice instructing him thus. "Go to Suvarnamukh, south of River Krishna. Excavate a lake there with your spear. Do penance near the lake. Get some golden lotus flowers from Devaloka and plant them in the lake. Raise a garden with good plants on the banks of the lake. Recite either the single syllabled or the thousand worded invocation of Sri Hari. Worship goddess Padma, with lotus flowers for twelve years. She will manifest herself before you, in a golden lotus blooming like a golden Lotus, as a girl of fifteen. You will regain your Lakshmi".

Vishnu mounted his vehicle, Garuda, and floated on it to Swami Pushkarini. He had a dip in the holy lake. The sages there extended a hearty welcome to him. Instructed by the heavenly voice. As desired by the Lord, Vayu brought some golden lotuses from Deva loka, the celestial world, obtaining Indra's permission. The lotuses were planted in the lake by Sree Hari. On the eastern bank of the lake Sree Hari installed the Sun and worshiped him offering one thousand golden lotus flowers. He recited the incantation "OM-HREEM SREEM KLEEM" one

ousand times a day. He offered tarpana, libation of water. He remained on milk diet for twelve years. Celestials including Indra were perturbed. They tried to disturb the lord's penance. They tempted their damsels with suitable instructions to disturb the lord's penance. Soon the lovely young girls landed near the lake, and began to play their tricks to hinder the austerities of Shree. Cupid also took active part and assisted the damsels. The lovely ladies collected flowers from the lake. Vishnu opened his eyes slightly. He understood the mischief played by the damsels and Cupid. He was not at all moved. He released his illusion Maya and continued his penance. Cupid and the ladies had to accept defeat. Looking at Maya the Lord said "You will be adorned in the world." He continued to offer worship to Padmini. Twelve years elapsed.

It was Friday, the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Karteeka (November) in the thirteenth year. The moon was with star uttarashadha. A brilliant light with enormous lustre shot up from the midst of the lake. Displaying golden hue and splendour of a thousand suns, the light was seen in a chariot in a golden lotus which had one thousand petals. Goddess Lakshmi with four hands was seated in the chariot in a lotus posture. She wore a smiling face. Her eyes were enchanting. She was exquisitely adorned. She held a lotus in her hand. She and Vishnu exchanged looks. Trumpets were blown by celestials. Heavenly music flew. Bugles were sounded. Veenas were played. Garvas danced. Gandharvas sang. The entire universe echoed with music and sound of drums.

Brahma could infer that it was an indication of the liberation of Goddess Lakshmi. He came down riding his swan. He was accompanied him. Sankara and his party also arrived. Maya and Sachi came. The regents of the eight cardinal points of

the universe were present. Vasishtha, sages such as Sanaka and many hermits assembled there. Every one saw the Goddess in the charming chariot at the hermitage of Padmanabha. Celestial beings showered flowers from heaven. Everyone was amazed at the sight. Residents of Patala also hastened to the scene to see Lakshmi. Demons also were there. "Ah! If only Lakshmi would be mine!" fancied they!

Lakshmi got up putting on a smiling face. She approached Sree Hari and placed a lotus garland around his neck. She pressed the Lord to her bosom. A part of her took seat in the Lords' bosom while every one present saw. Since then the lake acquired the name Padma Sarovara. The Lord blessed it, and eulogised it thus:-

"O Lake, on Your banks I have performed penance and got back Sri Lakshmi. Here after you will be known as Padma-vapi, Padmam and Padmasaras. You will have renown in the three worlds. You have taken up my heart as your abode." So saying he flew on his vehicle to Seshachala. All the sages praised the lake. "Who ever bathes in this lake will be rid of the sins accrued during his previous seven births and obtain wealth like the lord of Lakshmi," said Narada. Vasishtha declared that those having a holy dip in this lake would be redeemed of the sin they accumulated in ten million previous births and achieve prosperity. "Those who bathe in this lake will be rid of all their sins and become prosperous" announced Atri. Similar statements were made by others present. "Kings who are dethroned would regain their kingdom by holy dip in the Sarovara", said Angirasa.

"Brahmins-even though not learned, and even if they do not chant, holy mantras get purified in a day by a dip in this lake. Vysyas who spent their lives in cheating others become Kshatryias by a dip in this sacred lake" declared Pulastya. "Sudras who spent their lives unrighteously blaming gods and brahmins, become Vysyas by bathing in this lake." affirmed Kratu. All then returned to their respective abodes.

67. Arundhati, wife of sage Vasishta visits Teerthas

Arundhati, wife of sage Vasishtha, one day asked her husband "Lord, I want to do penance at the most holy of all Vyshnava Kshetras to propitiate Sree Hari. Kindly let me know which is such a sacred place". Vasishtha then enlightened his wife thus :

"Near the River Suvarnamukhi there is the most holy hill called Sree Venkatachala. Vishnu likes it most. So he came down to it from Vykuntha, By uttering its name all sins are effaced. By saluting it from a distance even, one is redeemed of his sins. There is a lake called Swami Sarovara on the hill. To the west of it is located the shrine of Sri Varaha whose glory is beyond description. To the south of Varaha's temple is the shrine of Sree Venkateswara, the bestower of boons to his votaries. The hill is known by several other names also e.g., Anjanadri, Seshadri, Vrishshabhadri, Narayanadri and Garudadri. One who recites these names every morning attains immense merit. In the Kali era devotees of Sri Venkatadhesa get their desires fulfilled. To the north of Swami Teertha lies the sacred Alasa Ganga. A dip in the Papavinasa, teertha, liquidates the sins of those who bathe in it. In the forest north east of Papavinasa is situated the Tumburu teertha. The area is full of trees and inhabited by wild animals. Many celestial beings, and sages bathed in it and got relieved of their sins. My dear, go to Swami Pushkarini, have a holy bath in it following the pres-

cribed procedure, pay obeisance to Sri Varaha and Sri Venkateswara. Bathing in the Akasa Ganga, Papavinasa and Tumburu teerthas get purified. Sit facing the east and carry on penance". Arundharati prostrated before her husband, obtained his permission and left. She reached Kapilateertha, had a holy dip in it and climbed Venkatachala. She bathed in Swami Pushkarini, and paid reverence to Sree Bhoovaraha. She prayed to the Lord thus: "O Lord, be pleased to bless me. I am going to do penance at Tumbu teertha. Merciful Lord, be gracious enough to be there with Lakshmi". Arundhanti then bathed in the waters of the teerthas as advised by her husband and commenced penance. She chanted the divine Mantra of Vishnu imparted to her by her husband. She spent twelve years in penance without food. Her maid servant, named Anumati served her all the time.

Gods, Gandharvas and sages were struck with wonder seeing the severe penance of Arundhati. Pleased with the tapas, the Supreme Being manifested himself before Arundhati on the full moon day of the month of Phaluguna. The sages and their wives rushed to Arundhati. Seeing the Lord, Arundhati prostrated before him. "Get up, Arundhati, You are tired on account of your penance. Tell me your desire. I shall grant it", said the Lord. Arundhati invoked the Lord thus: "Adorations to you, God of Goods, Narayana, Ocean of compassion. Save me, I know none expect you, Lord. In your heart resides Lakshmi, the bestower of wealth. Siva wears on his head the sacred waters sprung from your feet. Lord of Venkata Salla, you are the Almighty. If you are pleased with my penance reveal to me the glory of Tumburu Teertha". Sreenivasa then described the glory of the teertha thus: "Arundhati those

notes of mine who bathe in the waters of Swami Pushkarini blessed with longevity and prosperity. Those who bathe in the waters of Sree Venkateswara always are blessed with prosperity. Those who bathe in Tumburu teertha earn my grace as well as that of Lakshmi. Those who bathe in the waters of Thumburu Teertha on the full moon day of Phalguna, the day of my revelation here gain the merit of bathing in all teerthas. All teerthas shall be called Phalguna Teertha. Who ever bathes in this shall be rid of all his sins, whether acquired mentally or physically. All his desires would be fulfilled. One who wants children shall beget them. One who wants wealth shall acquire it, physical health will be restored to the sick, if only the sick have faith in the teertha. All those suffering from any calamities shall be free from them by bathing in the teertha. Donations at this teertha of sandal, and betel, are rewarded with great merit. Arundhati, you will be the best of all women devoted to their husbands. You will beget good sons". So blessing the devotees he retired.

Narada curses Tumbura - Tumbura Teertha

Once upon a time Narada and Tumburu, the celestial being and musicians, were floating in the skies playing on their musical instruments and finging the praise of Sri Hari. Narada saw Tumbura's Veena and questioned: "Tumbura, your Veena was previously shining like mine. How is it it is not so bright now? Tell me the truth". Tumburu said "I approached king Mahendra Barhis and sung his praise. He got this Veena prepared for me." Narada grew wild. He shouted and uttered a curse on Tumburu "You have extolled a human being. That is reprehensible. You do not deserve to be my friend. None except Sri Venkateswara should be praised. You will lose the power of flying in

the skies and fall down top-sy turvy." Immediately, Tumburu dropped down at a place near Ghona teertha on Venkatachala. It was a dreadful spot with wild beasts and no human habitation. However, Tumburu was praying to Sri Hari. He was not injured. Looking at the Ghona Teertha he invoked Lord Venkateswara that he was there to save him always. He had a bath in the teertha, did pranayama and offered his prayers. He recited the Lord's Mantra with its meaning and concentrated on the Supreme Being with great devotion. Thus he carried on tapas for one year. On the full moon day of Phalghuna (March), after one year the Supreme Being appeared before him with all his resplendent charm. Lakshmi was seated in the Lord's bosom. "Tumbura, my son, what is your ambition?" the Lord questioned. Tumbura opened his eyes and prostrated before the Lord. Beside the Lord were Parada and Vishvakshena and sages Agastya and others gazing at the Lord's feet. Several others were also singing the glory of the Supreme Being. The Lord then said "Have a dip in the teertha and get redeemed of all your sins. "Then all had bathed in the teertha chanting "Govinda." With a pure heart Tumbura had a dip in the teertha, approached the Lord and sang his praise thus : My Lord, saviour of those in distress, Lord of Lakshmi, Hail to you. Bless all the worlds with your benediction. I bow to you. Lord of Venkata Saila, you are the only redeemer of my sins".

The Lord then asked Agastya to narrate the glory of Venkatachala and Tumburu Teertha to all those who assembled there. Agastya narrated it thus :- "This Venkatagiri is the most sacred of all the sacred places in the world. All other teerthas reside here. The gracious Lord, Venkateswara, pardons even the worst sin committed by his devotees. Hence Venkateswara alone is to be worshiped. Those who bathe in the teertha here are freed from all their sins. One who donates gold, food, betel,

gandh or cold water at this spot gets all his desires fulfilled." Tumbura requested the Lord that the teertha might be named after him. The Lord agreed. "Accompanying Narada you sing y praise. Those who bathe in this theertha, on the full moon ay of the month of Phalguna, shall get their desires, mundane o otherwise fulfilled" he said and returned to his abode.

When the Sun enters the constellation of Pisces all the oly rivers, Ganga etc., congregate at Tumburu teertha. Once on a time, Ganga and other holy rivers thought that all sorts sinners were dropping their sins in their waters. They were orried about their own fate as they took over everybody, sins d got polluted. As advised by Narada they rushed to Venkata ila, abathed in the Swami Pushkarini and Ghona teertha and re purified. One who bathes in Tumburu teertha has no irth.

) Ghona Teertha

There was a Gandharva by name Tumbura, In the chill ate of a cold month he instructed his wife to accompauny him River Malapaha for a bath. He told her the procedure to be lowed for the holy dip. "The sun, during this month, is capa- of saving every one from all sins." added he. "Have devo- a. Light some lamps. Offer perfume and incence before Sree l. Offer good Nyedya to him. Pay obeisance to him along with ' he advised. After bath pay everyday adorations to Sree Kri- a, Vishnu, Narayana, Janardhna and for-sake all evi ldeeds and orm the religious ceremoney. You will reach the permanent de of Sree Vishnu" he told his wife. Tumbura's wife was very ry. She did not relish the advire of her husband. "How can I up in the biting chill of the winter? It is impossible for me to

wake up in the small hours of the morning. Who will save me if I die?" retorted she. Annoyed at her behaviour Tumbura uttered a curse on his wife. "Be a frog in a peepul tree with no water near Ghona teertha on VenkataChala" he said. "A son behaving contrary to Dharma, and a wife speaking undesirable words deserve punishment on the spot". thought Tumbura. The poor woman realised her folly and begged of her husband's pardon. Tumbura however, took pity on his wife. "When Agastya, the great sage, with his disciples visits the tree and describes the glory of the teertha to them you will listen to it. Then you will be free from my curse" said Tumbura. Reaping the harvest of hersin, Tumburu's wife was born as a frog. One day sage Agastya came there after paying homage to Sreenivasa. He narrated to his disciples the glory of Ghona teertha. The frog happened to listen to the sage. It became a woman and prostrated before the sage. Questioned by Agastya, she gave out her past life history and begged to be saved. She confessed her guilt. Agastya then narrated to her the duties of a faithful wife. "An ideal wife should never disobey her husband. By serving her husband faithfully, a woman achieves the realm of Vishnu, not otherwise. Husband is the Guru, teertha, Vishnu, Brahma, Siva and everything for a woman," said the sage. Since you have listened to the glory of Ghona teertha, you are rid of your sins. You will hereafter be free from your past sins also", Agastya declared.

Bathing in the waters of the Ghona teertha on the full moon day confers great merit to the person who bathes and also to his deceased ancestors. A dip in the Ghona teertha confers the same merit as that of a bath in the holy Ganges, Narmada or Chandrbhaga or Sarayu" said Agastya. Ghona teertha is called Thumburu teertha also

(c) Jabali Teertha.

Long long ago, there was a brahmin named Durachara, living on the banks of the river Kaveri. He was a drunkard, thief and a cruel man. There was no sinful deed he omitted to commit. Consequently, he lost his brahminism. By coming into his contact his associates also suffered similar fate. Durachara was then haunted by a goblin, Bhetala. He ran from place to place till at last he reached Venkatadri. and fell in a teertha called Jabali teertha. Immediately he regained his previous form as a brahmin. Though he was freed from Bethala he was not able to recollect all his past. He continued to wander. He met sage Jabali, who revealed to him his previous life and described the greatness of the Jabali teertha. thus :—

“A dip in Jabali teertha redeems anyone of his worst sins. Those who failed to perform the obsequies and religious rites of their deceased parents and attained the state of a pisacha would be relieved of their sins if they bathed in the Jabali teertha. The most heinous sins resulting from the gravest and forbidden acts, such as betrayal, ingratitude, insulting brahmins would be washed away by a dip in the Jabali teertha”.

Sage Jabali resided near this teertha with his disciples and offered worship to Lord Venkateswara with flowers from a garden raised by him. Hence, the teertha is named after the sage.

(d) Jaraharadi Teertha

In a cave east of Swami Pushkarini there is a sacred teertha called Jaraharadi teertha. Lucky people can locate precious stones and costly metals in its vicinity. There are two other

teertha also near Jarahara. If any one devoted to Venkateswara ascends the hill after bathing in this teertha also, miraculous effects are noticed. The blind get sight. The dumb speak. The deaf hear. Baren women beget children. Poor get enriched. None can know the power of Venkatadri. Sometimes, the hill is a mine of gold, othertimes it is a mine of gems. Yet it is a mine of knowledge some other times. It appears as an ordinary hill at times.

(e) Pandava Teertha

It is located on Narayanagiri. Advised by Lord Krishna, Pandavas visited this teertha. After bathing in its holy waters they offered worship to Srinivasa. One night, Yudhistara, the eldest of the Pandavas had a dream in which he was told that any one who stayed on the hill for one year would be rid of his sins and recover his lost property or kingdom. Ever since the Teertha has been famous as Pandava Teertha.

One who bathes in the waters of this holy teertha on the twelfth day of the bright fort-night of the month, when the Sun is in TAURUS (i. e.,) in the month of Vysakha or when the Sun is in conjunction with Mars, whether it be bright fort, night or not, will be free from all kinds of difficulties in his life.

(f) Ramakrishna Teertha

Long ago there was a great sage named Krishna who did penance on Venkatachala. For his daily bath he excavated a tank. Near it the ideal sage Rama Krishna performed tapas. A snake hill grew over the body of the sage. Not knowing its

the sage continued penance. Unable to bear the heat of the penance, Indra caused an incessant down pour on the snake hill for seven days. Rama Krishna did not mind the rain. By Indra's command there were thunder showers also. Consequently the snake hill melted away. From it sprang Sri Hari with his conch and discus in his hands. He was pleased with Rama Krishnas penance and announced that any one who bathes in the theertha on the full moon day when the Sun enters the constellation of Capricorn and the Moon is with Star Pushyami would be rid of all sins. "This day", on which I have manifested myself before you shall be a very holy one. All gods and men get purified by bathing in the sacred waters of this theertha today. This theertha shall be called Ramakrishna theertha hereafter", so saying the Lord disappeared.

(g) Kataha Teertha

On the banks of river Tungabhadra there was a big Agharaharam named Vedadhya. In it resided brahmins well versed in all Vedas and Satras. Righeous in conduct and upright in character they fed the poor always. Padmanabha was one such Pandit in that village. Kesava, his son, fell in evil ways and was excommunicated by the villagers. He deserted his parents, left his ideal wife and resided always in the house of a harlot. He spent all his wealth for his paramour and drink. Finally having no money, he thought it necessary to resort to theft and robbery. One day he set out to rob as a hunter. He put on a hunter's robe and held a sword in his hand. He killed a brahmin, looted his property and returned to his concubine. The dreadful sin of murdering a brahmin pursued him. He was dressed in black garband shouting. Kesava ran from him to save himself. Finding none coming forward to rescue him he returned home and sought his father's refuge. When

his father tried to save him, the sin of Brahma hatya warned Padmanabha. "If you try to intervene and save this wicked fellow I shall devour your entire family. Better leave your son to me. It is no good sacrificing a family for the sake of one member", shouted Brahmur hatya, The sin. Padmanabha said "I am unable to abandon my son. I like him much". Brahma-hatya then pleaded that Kesava was an outcaste and that an evil son deserves total desertion. Saying so it struck a blow on Kesava. Kesava began to weep. Just then sage Bharadwaja arrived on the scene. Padmanabha requested him to advise the course to be followed and the way his worthless son could be saved. "I have only one son, O sage", he wept. "If he dies, there will be none to pour libations for me and my ancestors" he lamented. Bharadwaja pondered over the matter for a while and said "Padmanabha, the sins committed by your son are countless. Yet I have a piece of advice. To the north of the holy shrine at Venkatachala there is a water source called Kataha teertha, which can erase your son's sins. Go there with your son and both of you drink of the waters of the teertha". Padmanabha and Kesava did as advised by Bharadwaja. Kesava was freed from his sins. Both the father and son paid obeisance to lord Bhoovaraha and Lord Venkateswara. The Lords were pleased. They blessed the father and the son. Lord Venkateswara assured that the waters of the teertha would be so powerful that the worst of the sinners would get redemption, if he drank of its waters.

Kataha Theertha bestows wealth and peace. One should drink of its waters uttering either the eight syllabled divine mantra or names of Lord Kesava. Drinking of the waters of the teertha, reciting Venkateswara's eight syllabled mantra grants wealth as well as salvation. Recitation of the sloka "Let the grave sins committed by me in my previous births be destroyed at once." redeems one of all his sins. If one drinks of the waters of the teertha daily he will attain salvation. Kataha teerthas its birth from the sacred feet of Vishnu. All desires has are achieved and all ills cured by the waters of the teertha.

69. (a) Papavinasa Teertha

The story of Dhridhamati

There was a holy hermitage called Brahmasrama near the Himachalas. It was located in a beautiful garden and inhabited by seges and learned men. Some house-holders and ascetics also dwelt there. Once, Dridhamati, a sudra went to the hermitage to learn the Sastras of the brahmins. He prostrated himself before the sages and observed the rite performed by the Ashramites. He wanted to undertake penance himself and expressed that desire to the Kulapathi of the hermitage. "Sudras are not to perform Yagas but to render service. They are not expected to study Sastras like Nataka or Vyakarana. Brahmins who teach the forbidden Sastras to Sudras have to be ejected from the village. 'The duty of the Sudras, it is laid down, is to serve the brahmins as ordained by Manu'" said the Kulapathi. Dridhamati felt small and left the ashram. Away from it he raised a hut of his own. In it he installed some idols, laid a garden, excavated a tank nearby and began to worship the idols. Fasting occasionally, he offered sacrifices to deities and remained on fruit diet. He extended hospitality to guests according to Sastras.

One day, a brahmin named Sumathi came to his Ashram. Dhridhamati received him well. Soon Sumathi and Dhridhamati became close friends. Sumathi used to frequent Dridhamathi's Ashram. Dridhamathi took advantage of the acquaintance and requested Sumathi to teach him how to perform Yagna. Sumathi duly obliged. After some time Sumathi died and suffered for

and Chandala in successive births. Thereafter he was born as Sudra, Vysya and finally a brahmin. One day he was possessed by a Brahmarakshasa. Consequently, he forgot all the duties of a brahmin. His father wept and took him to Agastya who was doing penance on the banks of River Suvarnamukhi, and sought the sage's help. Agastya told the father that as the boy in his previous life taught Vedic texts to a prohibited person he was reaping what he sowed. "To be redeemed of all the sins, let your son have dips in the River Suvarnamukhi and Papavinasa teertha for three days" advised Agastya. The brahmin did accordingly and his son was rid of the Brahma Rakshasa menace and emerged as a healthy and beautiful youth. The youth lived a happy life and was liberated in the end. The father too attained Moksha in the end. After his death Dridhamathi also had to go to hell and take several births later on. He was born as an eagle, and went to Sri Venkatachala, where he happened to enter the waters of Papavinasa teertha and drink of them. He left the ghost in the teertha and assuming a celestial body ascended to Indraloka in a celestial plane. A dip in Papavinasa teertha enabled a Sudra and a brahmin to attain salvation.

(b) The story of Bhadramati

In olden days there was a highly learned brahmin, named Bhadramati. He was well versed in all Sastras and Puranas. He was very poor and had no means of livelihood. He had six wives and many children. The family suffered untold misery. Unable to maintain it Bhadramati cursed his fate. "A poor man, however learned he may be, is forsaken by his own sons and relations and one and all", he thought.

"The rich be they stupid or characterless, are adored" he wondered. Worried about his fate he was sitting one day when Kamini, one of his wives, an ideal woman, approached him and said "Dear, you know everything. You are very learned. Kindly listen to me. On the banks of the River Suvarnamukhi there is the holy Venkatachala worshipped by Rishis. There a teertha called Papavinasa on it. Visit it with your wives and children and bathe in its waters. When I was a child I heard about the glory of that teertha from Narada. If one bathes in that teertha, following the rituals, he would be blessed with prosperity, I was told. Donation of land made near the teertha would grant all the desires of the donor. My father was benefited by such a gift". The lady then described in detail the benefits of land donation near Papavinasa. "However small the land may be, its donation leads one to Brahma loka from where there is no return to the earth. Gift of even ten cubits of land made at Vaishadri confers great merit. A poor and righteous brahmin should be selected as the recipient of any gift, as a gift to such is more sacred and useful".

Encouraged by his wife, Bhadramati left for the holy hill with his family. On his way he arrived at a town called Susali, where he requested a brahmin named Sushosha to donate to him a piece of land, just five cubits square. Sughosha considered himself lucky and donated the piece of land reciting the sloka :

"Prithivee Vyshnavee Punya, Prithivee Vishnu Palita Prithivyasthu pradanena Preeyatam Me Janardana" land, Prithvi, is Vyshnavi, the sacred. May Janardana be pleased by my donation of the land !" Sughosha ultimately reached Vishnu's region. Bhadramati proceeded to Venkatachala. He and his family had holy dips in Swami Pushkarini. They paid reverence to the lord, and went to Papavinasa teertha. There he donated the land to a votary of Vishnu. Pleased by the offering, Lord Vishnu manifested himself before Bhadramati. Bhadramati sang the glory of the Lord again and again. Lord Vishnu blessed him and assured him of a place in Vekhantha in

70. Varaha Teertha

North west of Swami Pushkarini lies Varaha teertha. When on account of the Chaos created by demon Hiranyaksha, the earth sunk to Rasatala, Brahma prayed to Lord Vishnu to rescue it. From the nose of Vishnu sprang the mighty Boar which dashed to Rasatala, killed the demon and lifted the earth up by his tusks to the surface of the ocean. Brahma then consecrated the mighty Boar on the north western side of Swami Pushkarini. The icon was bathed by Brahma and divine sages. Brahma then proclaimed that "this is teertha would be popular as Varaha teertha. One who visits this teertha but fails to bathe in its waters shall not be purified. Lord Srinivasa also will not be pleased if pilgrims fail to worship Sri Varaha before they proceed to worship himself". After this announcement Brahma consecrated Lord Srinivasa. After offering worship to Srinivasa and singing several of his praises Brahma caught hold of the feet of the Lord and prayed that the icon of Varaha installed by him should get priority in worship. The Lord granted Brahma's supplication. Lord Varaha should be worshiped first and then only obeisance paid to Lord Srinivasa. At the end of the previous Yuga the shrine of Srivaraha fell in ruins.

71. Kumura Dhara

Once upon a time the Lord of Venkatachala was having a stroll on Venkatachala in the guise of a charming youth. An old brahmin was then roaming about there- His eye sight was poor. He was suffering from hunger and thirst. He lost his way. "Where have you gone my son, Kondinya leaving me, an old man?" thus weeping, he sat near a hillock. Srinivasa saw him and asked him, "Why do you shout like this?. There is no human being here. Where does your Kowadinya sit here, old man?." The old man replied. "I am as good as dead here. where can I go? My hermitage is far awgy. I am unable to perform the rituals. My relations have deserted me. I do not know why god has made me, a disabled man, live thus in the world"? Venkatachalapati smiled and remarked "O brahmin, Your body is wrecked. Your eyelids are dropping. You are not able to see. Why do you still desire to live?" The old man replied "I have no desire to live except, for one thing. I must redeem my debt to Gods and my ancestors by performing daily rituals and religious offerings. How can I leave this body without redeeming these debts?"

Venkateswara, the youth offered his hand to the old bramin and helped him reach the water source. "Have a holy dip in these sacred waters and return to your hermitage", he said to the old man. The old brahmin bathed and emerged as a young boy of sixteen. The youth turned out to be the Almighty with one thousand hands and one thousand heads. Gods caused a downpour of flowers from heaven. Celestial drums were

sounded. The gods announced to the brahmin "O Brahmi, perform all your religious duties well. We give you the necessary financial help". They declared. "The old brahmin was transformed to a youth, Kumara, by a dip in these waters. So this source shall be named Kumara Dhara. Who ever bathes in the sacred waters of this source thrice a day for three months, living a life of restraint, shall be free from all diseases. His body shall become as strong as a diamond. He shall be rid of all sins and shall reach the highest region, the realm of Vishnu in the end".

This story is narrated in Varaha Purana

The following story is told about the same teertha in Markandeya Purana.

There was once a poor brahmin. Unable to maintain his family, he wept day and night "Why should I live at all? Money is the source of all happiness in this as well as the other world. I am reaping the fruits of the sin earned by me in my previous lives. I do not have money now. By observing righteousness one can secure happiness in the next birth at least. But I am old and unable to do any thing. My life, alas, is a sheer waste". Thinking thus, he was desperate. He left his family and reached River Suvarnamukhi and wanted to end his life by throwing himself into the river. He climbed Venkatachala, reached a valley and shouted "O Brahma, Vishnu, Moon, Sun and Aswins, all the world. Listen to what this woeul man says. This life of mine has been a desert owing to old age and penury. I am falling from height. I am falling-falling".

Lord Venkateswara, who was out hunting at that time in the guise of a prince, saw the brahmin. With raised hands he

valley from a height and committing suicide are prohibited by Sastras. I say this for your good only. Listen to me". The old brahmin saw the prince and entreated him to save him and his family.

"I shall grant what ever you want. Follow me. Catch my hand" said the prince. The brahmin did so. The prince took him to a water source, north of Papavinasa teertha and said "Have a dip in this. All your worries will vanish". The old brahmin had a dip in the holy waters and came out from them as a charming youth. Meanhile the prince disappeared. The brahmin searched for him in vain. A heavenly voice was heard by him thus "This is Venkatadheesa, your Lord, who made you a youth after your dip in the sacred waters. He grants you wealth. Return to your native place. Observe all the prescribed Dharmas. Donate to brahmins and feed them well. One who enjoys any forbidden thing is a beast. Do everything saying. 'May Srinivasa be pleased with this'. The gods wondered at the glory of the teertha. The old poor brahmin had become young and rich instantaneously. "This teertha shall hence forth be named Kumaradhara. Any one who bathes in this shall live happily and be free from sins" declared they. The brahmin returned home. He endowed many charities declaring that 'Sri Venkateswara be pleased. After his death he reached Sri Vishnu's region.

72. Akasa Ganga

Near the River Godavari there lived a pious brahmin, named Punyaseela. On the death anniversary of his father he worshipped and fed a brahmin who had no children. Consequently his body turned out to be a loathsome and abominable one with a donkey's face. Sage Agastya advised him to go to Venkatachala and bathe in Swami Pushkarini and Akasa Ganga. Punyasela did accordingly and regained his original body with a lovely face. Never should a childless man be engaged as recipient of Sradha food. If a person with children cannot be secured, the son or brother of the person performing the Shradha would do. A bath in Akasa Ganga early in the morning on the fullmoon day, when the Sun is in Aries, and the moon with the star Chitra, ensures salvation to the bather.

73. (a) Sanaka Sanandana Teertha

About one mile north of Papavinasana teertha there is another teertha by name Sanaka Sanandana teertha. It is worshipped by Siddhas. Human beings do not know its importance. Those who encounter obstacles in Yoga should bathe in the waters of Swami Pushkarini at sunrise on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Margasira (December), with a pure mind. From the next morning onwards, they should bathe in the Sanaka Sanandana teertha and invoke Lord Narayana one thousand times a day. If Yoga is practised afterwards success is assured.

(b) Kayarasayana Teertha

Near the Sanakasanandana teertha is located Kayarasayana teertha. The body of one who drinks of the waters of this lake gets purified instantly. A white leaf dropped in the waters of this teertha turns black in a moment. Learned men should perform their daily rituals as ordained by Sastras and surrender everything to Sri Venkatanadha.

This entire material istic world is bound to perish. The wise know this truth. Erring people go to hell. Those who do meritorious deeds attain happiness and prosperity. So Yogis always meditate on and think of Lord Venkata Nayaka. They engage themselves in the service of others and their preceptors, and rely on Dharma Sustras. House holders should be loyal to their wives. Yogis should control their senses and get enlight-

tened from Sadhus about what is good for them. They should know the meaning of the Vedas and learn Vedanta. They should not dissociate with what is good. Nor should they associate with what is prohibited. In short this is the Dharma.

(c) Phalguni Teertha

Arundhati, wife of Sage Vasista, did penance near a lake on Venkatachala. Pleased with her austerities goddess Lakshmi revealed herself before Arundhati on the full moon day of the month of Phalguna (March) and granted her prayer. She named the lake as 'Phalguni teertha'. Those who bathe in this Teertha following the procedure laid down, on the full moon day of Phalguna (March) will be blessed by Lakshmi. Some sages have their hermitages near this teertha.

There are several other teerthas on Venkatachala. Galava teertha was created by sage Galava. Its waters are capable of conferring salvation to those who drink of them Markandeya teertha, on the northern side of Venkatachala, was constructed by sage Markandeya. A dip in it ensures longevity. A dip in Yama teertha relieves sinners from hell. Vayu Teertha is another one capable of conferring salvation.

74. (a) The Sacred teerthas at the foot of Sri Venkatachala

There was once a brahmin who wanted to do extensive pilgrimage to all teerthas. He had a dream on the night before he started. In that, Lord Srihari advised him thus:- "On Venkatachala there are several sacred teerthas including Kapila Teertha. There is no need for you to go every where. Bathe in the teerthas on Venkatachala following the scriptures. You will acquire the merit you hope to accumulate by going on extensive pilgrimages". The brahmin woke up, gave up his idea of pilgrimages and proceeded straight to Venkatachala. He bathed in all the terthas on the sacred hill and acquired the merit derivable from various pilgrimages. Who ever desires to go round the earth on pilgrimages will do well to circumambulate Venkatatachala. By merely looking at the peak of this hill Balarama attained the fruit of all pilgrimages. Above the hermitage of Vishwaksena there are five other holy lakes. In one of those, Agni did penance. The sacred teertha is an unfathomable one. It is known as Agneya teertha. Above it is the sacred Brahma teertha.' The seven great sages had their hermitages and lakes near it. Seventeen water springs on the hill are holy and relieve the sins of those who bathe in their waters or sing their praise.

[b] Kapila Linga and Kapila Teertha

Sage Kapila worshiped the sacred Kapila Linga in Patala with celestial cow milk. The Linga shot up from Patala tearing

the earth. The celestial cow grew angry and put her foot on the linga and prevented it from growing taller. The huge linga is multi coloured, silver coloured at the base, golden at the centre and red at the head. It is five faced and three eyed. Its base is in the lowest region namely Patala. As sage Kapila worshipped it, it is called Kapilesvara linga. It was called Agneya linga in Treta age, as Agni worshipped it. In the Dwapara Yuga Chakra worshipped it. In the Kali era it is called Kapila. Near it is Kapila teertha. Those who bathe in this teertha or drink of its waters get rid of old age and death. A single dip in it confers much merit.

Above the Kapila teertha lies Vajra teertha. A dip in it ensures one a seat in the realm of Indra ultimately. Above Vajra teertha is situated Vishvaksena Sarovara. The teerthas of the three worlds congregate in Kapila teertha on the noon of the full moon day of the month of Kartika (Nov) and stay there for about four hours. By a dip in the waters of this teertha during that period one is relieved of all his sins and he finally reaches the realm of Brahma. Those who donate even a particle of gold on the banks of Kapila teertha earn the merit of donating a mountain of gold. Those who give alms near Kapila teertha go to Soma Loka after their death. Similarly those who gift away cows, land and impart knowledge to the needy go to higher worlds at the end of their present lives. One who bathes in this teertha reciting the sloka : "Varshe Varshetu Kartikyam Pournimasyam Mahatithe Aayayanthi Sarvateerthani Madhyahne Kapilam Sarah." acquires the same merit. Above this teertha is another sacred one called Chakra teertha. By a dip in this, Indra was freed from the sin he earned by his mis-behaviour with Ahalya, the wife of Goutama. Varuna's son did severe penance at Vishvakna teertha and was blessed with a body similar to that of Sri Hari. He was appointed as commander in-chief of the Supreme:- Being Above Vishvaksena teertha are located Panchayudha teerthas. Above them are Agni Kunda, and Brahma teertha, which relieve sins resulting from murders also.

75. [a] King Janaka

King Janaka was a master of all Sastras. He adhered to truth always. He never swerved from the path of righteousness. Devoid of anger and attachment he was content with what he had. He gave up all sensual pleasures. He had a brother named KUSAKETU. Sita was the faster daughter of Janaka. Kusaketu had three daughters. All the princesses were exceedingly beautiful. Janaka entrusted his kingdom to his brother, who ruled over it. Once he thought "I must be ever happy. Never should I face any sorrow." The idea was itself against nature. So Lord Srihari wanted to teach Janaka a good lesson. After some time Kusaketu and his wife died. "Where did you go, my dear brother, leaving me and your daughters? Till now I have never tasted grief. To day I have to weep on account of your death" wept Janaka who plunged in grief. Some how he completed the obsequies and libation ceremony of his deceased relations. Unable to contain the sorrow he left his kingdom, food, sleep and all comforts. Satananda, his priest, tried to console him. But Janaka's grief knew no bounds. He wept shouting What a great calamity has befallen me! My brother is no more. The ten headed Ravana and his son Indrajit, who are my enemies are ever ready waiting for an opportunity to kill me. I am old and helpless. I have another problem. where can I get a suitable husband to my daughter, Sita? My desire is that Seeta and my brother's daughters should be the daughters-in-law of one and the same king and live happily. Further, I am afraid of Ravana. Will that demon abduct Seetha? Many kings intend to marry my daughters. How can I fight them single handed? Our daughters are votaries

of Vishnu. Kindly enlighten and guide me. What is the way out? How can I be free from these worries? Who is my saviour now? By meditating on whom can a human being get material enjoyment as well as salvation?"

Satanada enlightened that Lord Ramesh, the Almighty was there to save his devotees from their difficulties. He narrated an incident from his own life thus:- "Once, I went to sage Valmiki. He received me very affectionately. We spent a good time in religious discussions. Meanwhile Narada, the illustrious sage, came playing on his Veena. We all accorded a hearty welcome to him. Narada enquired Valmiki about his welfare and penance. 'By your grace every thing is going on well. Fruits are available in and out of seasons also, by God's grace', said Valmiki. After exchange of formalities Valmiki questioned Narada Saint, you move every where; which is the holiest Vyshnavi's pilgrimage centre in all the three worlds? Which is the sacred teertha where all the other teerthas congregate? Which is the Kshetra, residents near which acquire immense merit? Where does Bhagavan Sri Vishnu dwell with his spouses? Which is the most holy teertha?" Narada said that similar queries were put to Sri Maheswara by his son, Skanda. He narrated the story of Skanada. In reply to Satananda's queries Narada replied: Sri Venkatachala is the Kshetra and the Swami Pushkarini is the teertha."

[b] Janaka Performs Aswamedha Yaga

King Janaka performed sacred horse-sacrifice, Aswamedha Yaga on the banks of the River Ganga. Several sages attended it. Janaka received them with due honour and said, "Blessed am I today. You have all come." The sages also expressed their happiness and spent the night in discussions on religious topics. The

morning they assembled before the king. Each one narrated or more legends of Lord Narayana. In the congregation sage Vamadeva was also present. Some sages asked him : "Vamadeva, have made extensive pilgrimages in the world. We would to know from you, Sir, Where does the Almighty reside?". Vamadeva answered: "About 200 yojanas south from here the sacred hill, Venkatachala lives he now. Gods, Gandharvas, Apsaras, and sages also dwell there doing penance. I have also gone there. I saw Narada, Agastya and other sages there. I asked them if they were there. They did not reply. Agastya, however, guided me and enlightened me about his presence thus :-

"Once Narada who meditated on the Almighty on the banks of the river Godavary could not have a vision of Bhagavan Vishnu. So, he went to Brahma and questioned him about the whereabouts of Bhagavan. Brahma went into contemplation for a while and said, : "now-a-days he is on Narayanagiri along with Lakshmi. You go there if you want to see him". Narada was on his way. We met him then. Then Brahma said to Narada "There are many lakes, tanks, rivers and ponds on the Hill. They should be worshipped. Go round the hill till you see Vishnu. Stay there till you have the Darshan of the Almighty".

6. Sudarsana, The Lord's Discus.

Once on the big hill, east of Seshachala, armed dacoits and anti social elements indulged in looting the properties of the innocent and killing them. Lord Venkatanath directed his discus, Sudarsana to go and put down the wicked. Sudarsana marched with his army to the region concerned and attacked the evil monsters. After annihilating the enemy he re-established sound administration in the region. Then there were plenty of timely rains resulting in bumper food-crops. Sages engaged themselves in dance peacefully. People lived happily.

One day Sudarasana assembled the people of the liberated region and ascertained from them their needs. They represented that Dytyas were creating all sorts of troubles to them in the region south east of Seshadri. These Dytyas were clever but mischievous. They employed all their ingenuity to trouble the pious sages and brahmins. They were well organised in war-fare and had many fortresses in the forests also. Sudarsana marched to that area with his forces. After a fierce battle most of the Dytyas were killed. When the rest of the enemy resorted to all sorts of treachery Sudarsana released his powerful weapon Hayascersha. The enemy was completely routed. The gods rained flowers on Sudarsana. Peace was restored in the country. Entrusting the country to an able ruler, Sudarsana marched to the western region with his army. He reached a dense and mountaneous forest inhabited by many wild animals.

In that area there was a mighty demon called Kirata. He offered his head to Lord Siva. But every time his head was cut, new one cropped up instantaneously. He did severe penance, pleased Lord Rudra and obtained a boon by which immunity from attack by men, Yakshas, Rakshasas and Siddhas was earned by him. On account of the boon, Kirata grew stronger and began to harass the entire world. He came to know about Sudarsana and wanted to give a fight to him. Sudarsana fought with all his strength. In the fierce fighting that ensued thousands on both sides perished. Blood streamed in the battle-field. The demon resorted to feigning play by exhibiting his illusory powers. Sudarsana directed his Chief, Bhadramukha to make short work of the enemy. He himself slayed thousands of the enemy's army. Finally, Sudarsana killed Kirata with the discus of the Lord. The forest was liberated from the demons.

Sudarsana rehabilitated the country after establishing peace and put it in charge of an able and righteous follower of his. He then marched to the north with his army. In that area there lived in those days a demon called Bherunda. Having obtained a boon from Brahma he was very strong. He indulged in destroying every one doing penance. Yavanas, Mlecchas and other evil-minded assisted Bherunda in his nefarious activities.

Once Bherunda attacked Sudarsana and fought a violent battle with him. Sudarsana's army could not withstand the onslaught of Bherunda for a while.

Later on, Bherunda hit back the demon. Due to the fighting, terror reigned everywhere. Sudarsana grew angry. From his anger fire sprang up. From the fire came out a wonderful being holding a bow and a sword. Kanakapringa, the lustrous being was as bright and brave as fire. Sudarsana

requested him to destroy the demons. The powerful Kanakapingala displayed a trick just for fun. He used the Gandharva Astra against the dytyas. The dytyas fell down unconscious. Gandharvas and gods eulogised Kanakapingala. After a while Kanakapingala withdrew the Astra. The fallen enemy recovered. Again a fierce battle was fought. It went on unabated, each party not yielding ground to the other. At last Sudarsana released Vayuvyastra which blew off the demon round the hill and then flung him into the sky and then dashed him against the ground. The demon's body became like a pumpkin hurled on the ground. Thus, Sudarsana liberated this region also and organised good administration. Gods and Gandharvas showered flowers on him and praised him. They requested Sudarsana to return to the Lord of Venkatachala. The country returned to normalcy. People were healthy and happy. Every one wished to be reborn on Sri Venkatachala.

Finally Sudarsana entered the Lord's Vimana.

all other courses and mantras, he should fearlessly practice his religious duties. "There is no mantra other than the eight syllabled. There is no God other than Srimannarayana. There is no Yoga other than renouncement" so declare the srutes: One who spends his life following the above, reaches the supreme in the end. One who knows the most sublime truth indulges in renunciation. Achieving benediction of the Almighty and following the course of detachment he adheres to meditation. Free from egotism the disciple is restrained in speech, deed and thought. He controls his senses and prefers a solitary place. Forsaking lust, anger, pride and power he behaves with tranquility and is free from selfishness. He possesses no property called his own. He identifies himself with Brahman by virtue of meditation on Brahman. His mind acquires tranquility and gets absorbed in the Supreme spirit. He has neither sorrow nor desire. He treats everything equal. He is devoted to Sri Hari. By devotion he can know Lord, Kesava. Such a devotee gets peace of mind. He understands the truth of the real nature of the Supreme Spirit. Finally he merges in the Almighty Sri Vishnu by his self surrender. "A sentient disciple" said Sootha "should have complete faith in his preceptor". Sootha continued his description of an ideal disciple thus: "He should surrender himself before the Lotus feet of his Guru. He should abandon all other Mantras and practices. He should realise 1) that there is no Mantra except the eight syllabled Narayana Mantra, 2) there is no God except Sreemannarayana, 3) there is no Yoga except renunciation. Such a disciple will reach the supreme state when he leaves his mortal body. By meditation detachment is achieved. One should have no ego. He should also be restrained in word, deed and thought. He should have control over his senses. Seated in a lonely place, solitary and pure, he should forsake lust, anger, arro-

77. Preceptor needed for every one

"Bhagavan, it is said that by surrendering oneself to his spritual preceptor only, one can achieve the supreme state. That this is the Dharma of Vyshnavism you told us once. Kindly elaborate the theory" the sages once requested Sootha. "This is a most secret subject. I shall however describe it in a nut shell as I learnt it from Vyasa." replied Sootha. He continued his narration thus: "Faith is the Supreme course enjoined by Vishnava Dharma. As your faith so your achievement. Guru is the Supreme Dharma and means also. He is the shelter, refuge and recourse. He can burn away our sins very quickly. Hence by all means one should have complete faith in his preceptor. Lord Vishnu is the Supreme Guru. He can destroy all our sins. He is the embodiment of compassion. The Guru redeems all the sins of his disciples and elevates the worldly minded people to the righteous path. The Guru knows what is justice. He is one who is learned in scriptures. He can discriminate Dharma from its opposite. He is an ascetic who fixes his mind on Brahman. He engages himself in the study and learning of Vedas. He has no egotism or arrogance. He has a stilled mind over which he has restraint. He adheres firmly to penance. He has no selfishness. He does every thing for the good of others. He is afraid of wordly attachment. He is pure, wise, and most humble. He has no enemies either in human or other beings. One should seek refuge in a preceptor with the above qualities and with utmost faith. The disciple should place all his burden at the sacred feet of his preceptor and carry on his daily duties to the best of his ability and having done so, he should be satisfied with the result."

all other courses and mantras, he should fearlessly practice his religious duties. "There is no mantra other than the eight syllabled. There is no God other than Srimannarayana. There is no Yoga other than renouncement" so declare the srutes: One who spends his life following the above, reaches the supreme in the end. One who knows the most sublime truth indulges in renunciation. Achieving benediction of the Almighty and following the course of detachment he adheres to meditation. Free from egotism the disciple is restrained in speech, deed and thought. He controls his senses and prefers a solitary place. Forsaking lust, anger, pride and power he behaves with tranquility and is free from selfishness. He possesses no property called his own. He identifies himself with Brahman by virtue of meditation on Brahman. His mind acquires tranquility and gets absorbed in the Supreme spirit. He has neither sorrow nor desire. He treats everything equal. He is devoted to Sri Hari. By devotion he can know Lord, Kesava. Such a devotee gets peace of mind. He understands the truth of the real nature of the Supreme Spirit. Finally he merges in the Almighty Sri Vishnu by his self surrender. "A sentient disciple" said Sootha "should have complete faith in his preceptor". Sootha continued his description of an ideal disciple thus: "He should surrender himself before the Lotus feet of his Guru. He should abandon all other Mantras and practices. He should realise 1) that there is no Mantra except the eight syllabled Narayana Mantra, 2) there is no God except Sreemannarayana, 3) there is no Yoga except renunciation. Such a disciple will reach the supreme state when he leaves his mortal body. By meditation detachment is achieved. One should have no ego. He should also be restrained in word, deed and thought. He should have control over his senses. Seated in a lonely place, solitary and pure, he should forsake lust, anger, arro-

gance, greed, and power and should sit in tranquility and meditate. He achieves indentity with Brahman, the Supreme, by virtue of his meditation. When he gets absorbed in the Supreme Spirit, his mind attains delight and gets soothened. He has neither desire nor sorrow then. All creatures are equal to him in such a State. He achieves utmost devotion towards Sreehari. Lord Kesava will be pleased with him. The real nature of the Supreme spirit is then understood by one, who has a pure and propitious mind. Supreme knowledge is then attained by the seeker. Finally, the seeker of the Supreme merges with Lord Vishnu, the Supreme.

The four faced Brahma, after creating Yagnas and mankind said, "Yagna is the supreme Dharma, the prescribed code of conduct of humanity, which pleases the Bhagavan and grants all desires. It is the highest recourse which should be conducted by all. One should do his duty not minding the result. To discard one's duty is a sin. To obey the mandates of the scriptures and follow the course of ethics is the primary duty of a man.

One should be detached and contented, treating gain and loss, success and defeat, cold and heat, fame and shame equal. The Supreme Being should be treated as his sole refuge. One should meditate mentally always on that Being, the Omnipresent. Preparation of Garlands on Venkatachala for the Lord and offering any service to Sri Venkateswara during the festivals to the best of one's ability are considered virtuous. They should be done with pure heart and devotion.

78. Ashtanga Yoga

In a chapter on the Glory of Venkatchala narrated in Varahapurna, Astangayoga has been dealt with. The following is a short account of it.

Brahman is called 'PARA' and Aparā. Aparā is divided into 'Kshara' and 'Akshara'. 'Kshara' is perishable and covers all creatures. The Supreme soul is Kootastha - Akshara, the omnipresent that controls from inside every being and supports the Universe. That is Iswara, the ever existing, never perishing Supreme, Almighty, Purushottama. The wise worship Sri Venkateswara after entering the Samādhi. Samādhi is attained by practising Yoga which has eight limbs. The limbs are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samādhi. The Yoga is therefore called Ashtangayoga. It should be practised daily.

'Yama' means self-control, 'Niyama' is restraint, or self-imposed religious observance or religious austerities. 'Asana' is the practise of the several yogic postures of the body like Svastika. 'Pranayama' includes inhaling, retaining and exhaling breath. 'Pratyahara' means destruction of mind from all objects of senses. 'Dharana' is retentive memory and steady abstraction of mind. 'Dhyana' is meditation, mental representation of the personal attributes of the deity. Samādhi is the last stage of Yoga, the abstract meditation and concentration of mind on the supreme spirit.

By practise of Yoga and meditating on the Supreme, bliss and knowledge are achieved. Learned men and sages resort to Yoga and discharge their religious duties and rituals during each part of the day. Every evening, the practise Yoga in a secluded place free from all disturbances. Sitting in a very comfortable posture, such as, Swastik Asan, keeping the head, neck and body erect, they concentrate on the tip of their nose. To practise pranayama, one should inhale slowly through his left nostril, retain his breath and awaken the Kundalini. When the Yogi desires to abandon his body, he should chant 'OM' and recollect repeatedly Lord Venkateswara. Then his soul leaves his body through the brahmarandhra, aperture in the crown of his head, and enter the highest region through the path of the ray of the light. Finally it merges with Lord, Sree Venkateswara and attains supreme bliss if the yogis mind is steady in the service of the Lord, and after initiation by a preceptor he practised Yoga and attained steadiness in it. By inhalation through the left nostril and taking it to Sushumna along with light the Yogi sees Lord Kesava. Ascending the Ajnachakra, he would enter the space between the eye - brows where the Lord of Lakshmi is to be seen in the orb of the Moon amidst one thousand lotuses. The Supreme Being is there as an 'Ann' of rice grown in wilderness. By the mental resolve of the Lord, nectar drops down on the disc of the Moon. The Yogi then should think that the nectar is spreading throughout his body. He should through the Sushumna take up the breath slowly, passing through all the above stages. Thus he should practise this, daily thrice, morning evening and mid - night. Without closing the nostrils by his hands, the Yogi should retain his breath, inhale and exhale allowing it upto 12 inches from the nose. By constant practise he attains strength, health and longevity.

79. The 108 names of Sree Venkateswara

Once upon a time, Sesha gave out to sage Kapila the 108 names of Sree Venkateswara. Kapila in turn preaced them to Sootha. The names are sacred and meritorious. They annihilate sin. Lord Brahma offered worship to Sri Venkateswara, long ago, with golden lotus flowers from Akasa Ganga, uttering those 108 names. He achieved his desire. Recital of the names grants prosperity, health, knowledge and happiness to those who recite. The prosody is Anustup, God, the Lord of Venkatachala, Sakti is Srinivasa. Invocatory slokas, given below contain the one hundred and eight names of Sri Venkateswara.

“Aum namo Venkatesaya, Seshadrinilayaayacha
Vrishadriggocharayaatha vishnave satatam namah
Meruputra girisaya Sarasswamy thatec Jushe
Kumarakalpa sevyaya vajridrigvishayayacha
Suvarchala suta nyasta synapatya bharayacha
Ramaya padmanabhaya sada vayusthuthayacha
Tyakta vykuntha lokaya giri kunja viharine
Hari chandana gotrendra swamine sathatham namah
Sankha rajanya netrabja vishayaya namonamah
Vasuparicharatratre krishnaya satatam namah
Abdhi kanya prishwakta pvakshase yenkatayacha
Samakadi mahayogi poojithaya nantonamah

Devajit pramukha anantha dytya sangha prauine
Swethadweepa vasanmnktha poojithanghri yugayacha

Sesha parvatha roopatva prakasana parayacha
Saanu sthapitha tarkshyana Tarkshyachala nivasine

Maya goodha vimanaya Garuda skandha vasine
Anantha sirase nityam anantakshaya te namah

Anantha charanayatha sreesaila nilayayacha
Damoodaraya te nityam neelamegha nibhayacha

Brahmadi deva durdarsa viswarupaya te namah
Vykunthaagata saddhema vimananthargathayacha

Agastyabhyrdhithasesha Jananadriggocharayecha
Vasudeva Haraye teertha panchaka vasine

Vamadevapriyaya tha Janakeshta prayayacha
Markandeya mahateertha jaatha punya prayayacha

Vakpathi Brahma datreecha Chandra lavanya dayinee
Narayana nagesaya brahma kluptotsavayacha

Sankhachakra varanamra lasat karatalayacha
Dravan mriga madasaktha vigrahaya namoonamah

Kesavaya namoo nityam nityayavvana moorthaye
Arthitaartha pradatrecha viswateertha aghaharine

Teerthaswami sarassnatha janabheeshtaprayayine
Kumaradharika vasa Skandabheeshta prayayacha

Janudaghna samudbhoota potrine loorma murthaye
Kinnara dwandva sapantha pradatre vibhavenamah

Vyghanasa munisreshtha poojithaya namonamah
Simhachala nivasaya Sri manarayayanayacha

Sadbhakta Neelakanthaarchya Nrisimhaya namonamah
Kumudaksha gana sreshtha synapatya prayayacha

Durmedhahprana hartrecha Sreedharaya namonamah

Kshatriyantaka ramaya matsya roopayathenamah

Pandavari prahartrecha sreekaraya namoonamah

Upatyaki pradesastha sankara dyatha murthaye

Rukmabja saraseekoola lakshmee krutha tapasvine

Lasadlakshmeekarambhoja datta kalharaka sraje

Salagramanivasaya Suka druggocharayacha

Narayanaarthithasesha jana drig vishayayacha

Mrigayarasikeyatha Vrishabhasuraharine

Anjanagothrapatheye Vrishabhachalavasine

Anjanasutha datrecha Madhaveeyaduharine

Priyangu priyabakshaya swethakola varayacha

Neela dhenupayodhara seka dehodbhavayacha

Sankara priyamitraya Chalaputra priyacha

Sudharminee suchytahya pradatre Madhughatine

Krishnaykhyā vipra vedantha desikatva pradayacha

Varahachala nadhaya Balabhadrayathenamah

Trivikramaya mahathe Hrishikesayatenamah

Achyuthaya namonityam Neeladri nilayayacha

Namah ksheerabhi nadhaya Vykunthachala vasine

Mukundaya namonityam Ananthaya namonamah

Virinchabhyarthitaaneeta sowmya roopaya te namah

Suvarna mukhari snatha manujaabheeshta dayine namah

Halayaudha jagat teertha Smastha phaladayine

Govindaya namoonityam Sreenivasayathe namah

Greenivasa is pleased with those who either listen to or recite the above names with steadfast devotion. These names should be chanted while worshipping the Lord. Liberation is assured to those who offer worship reciting these names.

Only those, who have the requisite devotion and earnestness are eligible to recite these sacred names.

80. Arjuna Visits Suvarnamukhi

After they married Draupadi the Pandavas went to Hastinapura, as advised by Dhritarashtra. They stayed there with the Kauravas for five years. Pleased with them, Dhritarashtra gave them their half share of the kingdom in the presence of Krishna and other elders. The Pandavas then went to Khandava-Prastha along with Krishna. They built a new city and named it 'Indra Prastha'. Later on, Krishna left for his capital. As advised by Narada, the Pandavas decided to have Draupadi as their wife one year each by turns. A condition was stipulated by them by mutual consent that any of them who happened to see Draupadi, out of his turn, had to go on pilgrimage for one year. One day a brahmin came to the court of Yudhishtira and complained that his cow was stolen. Arjuna, who wanted to help the complainant, hastened to get his weapons to recover the cow. By accident he happened to see Draupadi and Dharmaraj seated together. Arjuna knew that it was not his turn. He was aware that it was a violation of their agreement. But he was more anxious to help the brahmin, come what may. So, he rushed to recover the cow. He killed the thieves and restored the cow to its owner. Afterwards he met Yudhishtira and said "I have broken our vow. Kindly permit me to go on pilgrimage". Yudhishtira, however, argued "You had to violate the agreement for a sacred cause., You saved a cow and punished a thief. It is no violation." Yet, Arjuna pleaded "Agreement has to be honoured at any cost. Violation of it should end in punishment. Further, I am also eager to go on pilgrimage. I reiterate my request. I implore you to permit me to.

go". At last Dharmaraj permitted. Arjuna fully equipped, proceeded on pilgrimage. He visited the River Bhagiradhi and several other sacred places like Prayaga and Varanasi. He paid reverence to the patron deities at Puri, and Simhachalam. He had dips in the holy rivers, Mahanandi, Godavari, Malapaha, Krishnaveni, and Pinakini. After visiting Sri Parvata he reached Venkatachala and River Suvarnamukhi. The river had many Sivalingas in it installed on either side. To its south Arjuna saw Kalahasti, the abode of Lord Siva, named Kalahasteesvara. He bathed in the waters of the river and paid reverence to the deity there. On the hills nearby Sidhas were singing the glory of Siva. Yogis were meditating on him. Near the hill resided sage Bharadvaja in a hermitage situated in the midst of a beautiful garden. The forest nearby was inhabited by many wild animals. Lions also were moving freely. Arjuna was elated on seeing the Ashram. He entered it, saw the sage amidst his disciples. The sage's body was shining with radiance. The sage looked like Srutis, Smritis and Puranas personified. He had the brilliance of Brahman.

Arjuna slowly approached the sage and prostrated himself before him. Bharadvaja received him with great eclat and blessed Arjuna, and offered him a seat. He then thought of the celestial cow, Kamadhenu, which appeared before him in a move and furnished a sumptuous dinner to the royal guest. Arjuna had a hearty meal and offered worship to the revered host. Then he wanted to know about the river Suvarnamukhi. Bharadvaja enlightened him about it.

81. (a) Markandeya Visits Seshachala

Markandeya, son of Mrikandu, after his intensive prayers was blessed with longevity by Lord Siva. He returned to his parents and prostrated himself before them. He enlightened his parents about his achievements and requested them to permit him to go on pilgrimage. "Your intention is laudable. You are an ideal son. A good son is one who pleases his parents by his exemplary life and achievements. An ideal wife is one who desires the good of her husband always. A sincere friend is one who conducts himself alike in pains and pleasures of his companion. One can have such a son, wife, or friend by the merit of his previous lives only. Parents feel most happy when their sons are with them. So also sons feel when they are near their parents. Seeing our condition, my son, how can you leave us and go?" observed the parents. Markandeya assured his parents that he would be seeing them every year, and added "the merit acquired by one who visits holy places and bathes in sacred waters purifies the entire family." The parents were happy, hugged their son and permitted him blessing him thus : "May you live long, our good and dear son. May you have ever lasting bliss. Be inclined to do your duties always". Markandeya thanked his parents, went round them and left for Varanasi. He had a dip in the holy waters of the River Ganga, and paid reverence to Lord Viswanadha of Kasi. Later on, he saw Garuda flying in the skies and enquired him about other sacred places worth visiting. "The holiest of all teerthas is on the banks of River Suvarnamukhi, in the south. There is a sacred hill called

Venkatasaila, which should be visited by one and all. There live many sages and yogis engaged in meditation. The hill is capable of redeeming one of all his sins. By visiting it gods also are revered" said Garuda. Garuda then narrated his own experiences. "All teerthas are there. Of all Swami teertha is the most holy. West of it is the shrine of Sri Bhoovaraha. South of it dwells the Lord of Vykuntha. All gods are there worshiping him. Better go there, bathe in the Swami teertha, pay homage to Venkatadheesa. You will be happy". Garuda said and departed to Venkatachala.

Markandeya went to Suvarnamukhi and then to Seshadri. He came across some disciples of Agastya, on their way to Seshagiri. All visited the teerthas on the way and bathed in their waters. On their way they all paid reverence to Lord Narasimha, in a cave and prayed to him "O Lord, Narasimha, saviour of Prahalada, save us". They then proceeded further and had holy dips in Swami Pushkarini. They visited Lord Swethavaraha. Prostrating themselves before the Boar bodied Lord, Markandeya paid homage to him thus: "O Lord! Varaha, salutations to you. Achuta, Varada, we prostrate our selves before you. You rescued the earth when it was in great peril. Then you assumed the body of a boar. Save us, Lord Sree Venkatavaraha, saviour of your votaries." All then went to the shrine of Srinivasa. Markandeya prostrated before the Lord and sang his praise thus:- "Lord, Your eyes shine like the Sun and the Moon. Your consort is Lakshmi. Brahma and Siva also pay obeisance to you. You are the father of Cupid and redeemer of all sins. Save us, Lord of Venkatagiri, Ocean of compassion, we seek refuge in you. We salute you always, Lord of the Universe. There is no master except you.

"Vina Venkatesam Nanadho nanadhah

Sada Venkatesam smarami smarami

Hare Venkatesa praseedd praseeda

Priyam Venkatesa prahaccha, prayacha!"

I have come over here from a far away place, to worship you. Grant me Lord, the merit of daily worshipping you. Pardon me, my short comings. I have committed many blunders out of ignorance. Lord Hari, Lord of Seshachala, Pardon me, Pardon me." After the prayer Markandeya remained silent, keeping his hands on his head. "I am pleased with your prayer. Let me know your desire. I shall grant it" announced Srinivasa. "My Lord, what else do I want? I must remember you always. Grant me this boon" replied Markandeya. The boon was granted. Turning to Suddha, disciple of Agastya, the Lord said "All your sins will be liquidated by worshipping me. Return to your Guru's hermitage after circumambulating the Vimana of my shrine". Suddha did so and sat. Markandeya then enquired Suddha about his native place, his Guru and the sins to be eradicated. Suddha then narrated his story thus :- "I am a brahmin from the central region of Kanchidesa. I have a big family. I accepted several undesirable gifts to maintain it. I am wandering every-where, having neither food nor clothing. I enjoyed many donations, which are prohibited by scriptures, thinking that I was earning wealth. I never did any thing good. I took no baths. I never did Sandhya Vandan or Japa, I did not worship god or guest. Seeing me, all my villages cursed me to be the worst brahmin. Revati, my wife, a good lady, told me one day "You had committed all sins to maintain the family. You could not save a pie. You accepted gifts intended to the dead and ate the food offered to them. There is no food for us today. Our children are starving. You don't care to notice their fate. I am helpless. The learned say that Lord

Venkatanayaka grants the desires of all. Please go at once to the Lord" I listened to my wife and went to the hermitage of Agastya and prostrated myself before the sage. Agastya questioned me about my problems. I told him about the curse pronounced against me. I had entreated him to accept me as his disciple and purify me. The sage could know by divine insight all the sins committed by me. He said, "You are now cleansed of your sins by your desire to undertake pilgrimage to Venkatagiri." All brahmins there declared that I was purified. They advised me to go to Venkatachala, worship Lakshmi and Varaha and return. Agastya enlightend me about the procedure to worship. So I am Agastya's disciple".

Markandeya accompanied Suddha. Both returned to Agastya's hermitage and stayed there for some time. The sage described the glory of Venkatachala to them. "Sri Venkatachala is a sacred Kshetra. From Vykuntha, Lord Vishnu descended on Kreedachala, otherwise called Venkatasaila, near Suvarnamukhi. He was consecrated there. In the Anandanilaya on that hill resides the saviour of the Universe, Vishnu, along with Goddess Kamalalaya.", he added. Agastya advised Markandeya to go to Venkatachala once again and worship the lord after bathing in the Pushkarini and Kumaradhara. When Markandeya visited Kumaradhara, there was a big concourse of pilgrims there on the full moon day of Magha (February). Markandeya sang the praise of Lord Venkatesa, who advised him to return to his parents. "One would achieve the merit of pilgrimages and teerthas by serving his parents", said the Lord to Markandeya. Markandeya returned to his parents and narrated to them about his pilgrimage and experiences. He spent his life happily serving his parents.

"Let us have a dip in this and proceed to the eastern part on the hill. This holy lake is capable of conferring the merit of all *teerthas*" said Agastya. All had a bath in the lake, offered prayers and resumed their quest.

On the northern bank of the lake, some were performing penance facing the south. The sages approached them and were received with honours. "Who are you engaged in meditation here? This locality is wonderful" observed the sages. "The Almighty dwells on this hill. We are here meditating on him. We are contemplating on Jagannadha, Janardana, Hari. You can also see Him. To the east of this place, on the hill dwells Sankara. You may visit him also" so saying Sanatkumara and others who were there disappeared.

Agastya and his party proceeded further and saw a huge tree with flowers covering the hill itself with its shade. The seven great Maharshis were seated near the foot of the tree. "What for are you all on this sacred hill? Whom do you wish to see?" Agastya questioned the Maharshis.

"We are here to have a vision of Lord Janardana, the saviour of the Universe. He is our sole object. He is Krishna, the only Lord to be worshipped" replied the anchorites. "You also go towards the east to Simhadri, where you can see the Lord" they advised. Agastya obtained the permission of the seven Rishis and along with his party proceeded to the northern part of the hill. There also they were unable to see the Almighty. Then they went to the eastern part.

(b) Agastya sees a Marvel

Agastya and his party wandered in the eastern part of

object shining like the Sun. The area was full of trees. Wild animals were freely moving. Celestial beings were spending their time happily. At one place a lofty peak looking like a giant was seen. Near it was a big cavity. "This looks like the gate-way to Death!" remarked Agastya on seeing it. The cavity disappeared in an instant. The sages wondered and said that it was all due to the greatness of Agastya. Nearby, there was an unusually huge sala tree with tender leaves. Agastya approached it. Indra holding his weapon, Vajra, was sitting under it. His crown was dazzling with lustre. All the rulers of the four sides and four corners of the Universe, Gandharvas, Kinneras, and several celestial beings were attending on him. Agastya and his party went near Indra, and offered worship to him. In return, Indra also paid respects to Agastya.

"How is it you are all here? any special purpose? let us also know" Agastya asked Indra. "We have come to see the Almighty, Sri Narayana, who has come down to Simhachala. We are praying for his vision" said Indra. "We also desire to see him", said Agastya." Bhagavan Hata also dwells here. You can go and see him on the southern side of the hill. Sages, Durvasa, Nandikeswara and others also are here" observed Indra. On the south eastern part of the hill, Agastya saw Sankha, Chakra, Gada and Sakthi, the weapons of Lord Vishnu shining very brilliantly. He went near them and prostrated himself before them. He went round them in clockwise direction and then proceeded to the southern part with his party.

(c) Agastya pays obeisance to Lord Sankara

That part of the hill was also beautiful. Vidyadharas were there with their wives. Gandharvas and Kinneras were indul-

ging in their own fields of activities. Fine and fragrant breeze was blowing. There was a huge beautiful tree of rare species, full of tender leaves. Agastya approached it with curiosity. Lord Siva was seated there. With his matted hair, red eyes emitting fire, and four arms, Neelakantha was shining like the rising Sun. Several of his attendants in many shapes and bodies, Nandikeswara, Doorvasa, Bana, and many Yakshas and celestial beings were attending on him. Gandharvas HAH, HOO HOO were offering worship to him. Agastya prostrated himself before Lord Siva. Others also paid reverence to Siva and sought his blessings. "We have come to you, Lord, why don't you talk to us? Why are you here?" Agastya asked Siva. In a solemn voice Sankara said: "Narayana, the eternal, Almighty, the Omnipresent, Bhagavan, Purushottama dwells on this hill. He is the final refuge for all. As my mind is concentrated on him, I could not speak to you. There is no other reason for my silence. You also search for Hari. You will find him seated on Garuda. Do not be worried. I gave suitable instructions to Brahma also on the same point previously" clarified Sankara. "Search for him on the hill. Concentrate on him and proceed" he advised Agastya. Singing the glory of Siva also, the party proceeded further to the south-west on the hill. There, they saw a big banian tree. At its foot was sitting Vishwakshena, the master of Suras, surrounded by many able bodied associates of his. He was looking like Indra. Around him were seated thousands of Dytyas, Rakshasas, Gandharvas and the Yakshas. All of them were armed. Thousands of other beings, Vyshnavas, were around him as if they were about to consume all the seas. Gandharvas were singing and Apsaras dancing near Vishwakshena, while Devas and Brahmarshis were seated near him. Agastya was amazed. He went near Vishwakshena with his party and paid obeisance to him. He sought his blessings. Vishwakshena had Sankha, Chakra and Gada in three of his hands, while he held his fourth hand in a pose assuring fearlessness,

"You can all have a vision of the Omnipresent Lord, Sreehari on this hill. Narayana, the God of Gods, dwells here. You can wander here by the grace of Sreehari. He will manifest before his votaries. Perform your tapas with attention concentrating on Lord Vishnu" said Vishwakshena and disappeared receiving salutations of all.

The sages led by Agastya moved from place to place and from peak to peak amidst picturesque scenes on the hill. They saw celestials, who assumed bodies they wished. Agastya said "In the war between Devas and Rakshasas long ago, Indra defeated his enemies. The conquerors are here with their wonderful bodies. We have seen them and are going to see the mountains. You are all very strong." "Why are you roaming here? Are you here to see any great person?" he questioned. "We are followers of Vishwakshena, the great. He has complete control over the Universe including Gandharvas, Yakshas, and sages. We pay obeisance to him. He is like Narayana himself. He slayed Vrishabha as ordered by Lord Sreehari. He is the most ardent votary of Vishnu. He is capable of annihilating all worlds" replied the Gandharvas. Agastya paid reverence to Vishwakshena and left along with his party in his further quest.

On the beautiful summit of Vrishabhachala, there were very many useful trees, streamlets, water sources, caves and birds. The sages bathed in the holy waters and offered worship to the Gods. They saw monkeys jumping from one tree to another. Animals were roaming freely. Agastya came across Kumaradhara water falls where Shanmukha did penance to propitiate Lord Vishnu. All had refreshing bath in the waters and offered worship to Govinda and meditated on him with devotion. They resumed their further search, bathing in all the teerthas they came across.

83. Chakra Teertha

In days of yore Vasishtha, Atri, and some other sages were offering worship to Lord Sri Ranganatha at Sriranga. One day a Gandharva called Sundara accompanied by one hundred Gandharva ladies came to the river nearby. They were all bathing in the waters of the river with naked bodies.

In order to offer their midday prayers Vasishtha and some other sages also came to the river at the same time. The ladies were afraid on seeing the sages. They put on their clothes hurriedly. Vasishtha got furious and cursed Sundara to become a demon. The ladies prayed to the sage to forgive their husband saying "O great sage, pardon this single fault of Sundara. We can not live without him". Vasishtha cooled down and assured the ladies that Sundara would after sixteen years go to a lake called Chakra teertha on Venkatachala and attempt to devour sage Padmanabha, when the discus of Vishnu would cut his head to save the sage. "Sundara will then regain his original body and the period of curse will then end" said Vasishtha, who then returned to his hermitage.

The Gandharva ladies began to weep as Sundara became a Rakshasa with a fearful body. Afraid to see him they left him. Sundara became a Bhyrava and ate every one he came across. He wandered everywhere and finally arrived at Venkatadri. As the period of curse expired he happened to go to Chakrateertha to eat sage Padmanabha. The enraged sage Padmanabha beseeched Sri Hari. The Lord's discus rushed to him and separated the Rakshasa's head from his body. Sundara

then recovered his celestial body and sang the praise of the discus, Sudarsana. Blessed by the divine weapon and taking leave of the sages Sundara returned to his place. Padmanabha then requested the discus to stay there for some time so that the lake might be named after him, and the sages could live there free from fear. The water source was from that time onwards called "Chakra teertha". Sudarsana, the discus assured Padmanabha that those who bathe in the teertha would prosper in every way.

84. Sages worship Srinivasa

On Venkatachala were seated many sages. Agastya and his party saw them. They were received with courtesy. "We are fortunate today. We have met you, great sages, kindly let us know the purpose of your visit" the sages there asked Agastya.

"We are in search of the Lord of the Universe, the Omnipotent. Unable to have his vision, we are wandering. Now we are before you" replied Agastya. The sages sitting on the hill said: "There is a king, Sankha, by name, son of Sutha. He has worshipped the Almighty and he is now doing penance on the banks of Swami Pushkarini. He had the vision of Bhagavan. So, let us all go to Swami Pushkarini at once and behold Lord Pusushottama, the Almighty. Let us not waste time here" So saying the sages accompanied by Agastya and his party proceeded to Swami Pushkarini. Discussing about the glory of Narayanadri, they were nearing the lake. Meanwhile, thousands of Siddhas, natives of the white islands met Agastya and his party. Both sides exchanged greetings and courtesies. All of them accompanied by Brihaspathi and Sukra reached the Pushkarini.

There also the Lord was not found. Sankha engaged in deep meditation was there. He saw the sages and was exceedingly glad. He was reminded of the blessings he received that one day great sages would meet him. Immediately he got up and paid reverence to the visitors.

Another devotee, King Uparicharavasu, Sankha and several others assembled at the Swami Pushkarini. They desired to have a vision of Govinda. They had their holy bath in the Pushkarini and spent some days worshipping Sreehari. They did severe penance for three days there. On the fourth day, Lord Narayana revealed himself before them. Bright as the rising Sun, the Lord was lustrous. His eyes were charming, and his diadem was set with precious stones. His face was calm. His neck was like a conch. His chest was broad. He had majesty in his person. He had one thousand, long hands. He held various weapons in them. His body was exquisitely decorated with costly and precious ornaments. His lips were red. His eyes were rosy. He wore brilliant ear-rings, which threw lustre on his face. His eye-brows were enchanting. His body was dressed with splendid silk clothes and anointed with celestial sandal paste. He wore Vyjayanthi on his chest. It was shining like lightning in the dark cloud. The bases of his feet had marks of the conch, flag, discus and lotus. His crown was glittering. He was seated on Garuda. Goddesses Sri and Bhoo were on either side of his. Like the destructive fire at the end of an era, he was blazing. He was a terror to the wicked and a source of courage and fearlessness to the good.

85. Maharashis worship Bhagavan

The sight of the Lord was so extra-ordinary as was never before seen by any one, human beings or celestials. Every one looked at the wonderful, beautiful and brilliant sight with eyes wide open.

"Lord we are all afflicted with sorrows" they all cried and fell down on the ground, prostrating before him and yelling" "Lord save us, Save us." Brihaspathi, Agastya, Sukra and Vasu gazed at Bhagavan again and again. They saluted him with devotion. Meanwhile, the sound of hundreds of conches was heard from the sky. Melodious sounds of many musical instruments were heard. The entire demon race was struck with fear. These dwelling on Narayanadri were very happy. Even the animals dwelling on the hill felt elated. By the sound itself, Brahma could infer that Lord Vasudeva revealed himself and descended on the hill. Lord Sankara accompanied by Durvasa and other sages came down to the Almighty. Indra also could know that it was the great occasion of manifestation of the Almighty. Accompanied by Devas he rushed to the hill. Hearing the sound of sankha, Vishwakshena could make out that it was the signal proclaiming the descent of Sreehari. He also hurried to the Lord. The seven great sages came. Also Sanaka and Sananda. Everybody saluted with great devotion and joy. The Lord descended seated on Vynatheyra on the peak of Hemadri. "Hail to you, O Lord, hail to you," cried all. The radiance of the Lord was so brilliant that even

Brahma then sang the praise of Srivishnu thus : "Salutations to you, Lord of the Universe, the thousand faced Purushottama, Wearer of thousand diadems. Salutations to you, Narayana, Lord of Lords, saviour of all, smaller than the smallest atom, bigger than the biggest thing in the Universe, the primeaval, Lord of every thing, I pray to you. Have mercy on me."

You are the purest of all. You are eternal. I salute you always. You are the cause of every thing. You are the everlasting Lord. None can know you, not even myself, nor even Sambhu. I do not know your real, eternal form. Lord, extend your benevolent looks on me.

Sambhu then eulogised Sri Vishnu thus: "I pay reverence to you, O creator, protector and destroyer of the Universe. You are the destroyer of the wicked and saviour of your devotees. I salute you, Supreme Lord. The learned desire to reach your realm. You are equal to a thousand Suns. You are the original Supreme Being. Great sages have come to merge in you O Purushottama. Indra attained his office as the Lord of Devas by performing one hundred horse-sacrifices and pleasing you. By performing similar sacrifices, Brahma gained his office. I myself worship you by performing Sarvamedha sacrifice and achieved this present office which is very difficult to attain. You are the Supreme Spirit. I salute you, Lord. You are the remover of the delusion and dispeller of sorrow. Have mercy on me. O Mahamaya, the thousand-headed master of the Universe, the principal object of all the worlds, Vishnu, the multiple armed, multiple mouthed, multiple eyed, dark hued, resembling tamala tree, Lord with a dazzling diadem set with numerous precious stones, I salute your form",

The sages then paid reverence to the Lord thus : "Salutations to you, Krishna, the Almighty, salutations to you, Vishnu the Supreme Soul, the refuge for all created beings, the omniscient, salutations to you. Lotus eyed Achyutha, creator of the Universe, the powerful, You are in a state of half contemplation and half sleep, which state cannot be seen by the wisest of the yogis even. I salute you, Jagannadha. Relaxing on the Ocean of milk, you are the sole refuge of those afflicted by any calamity. Save us, protect us, saviour of the down trodden. your form shines with the brilliance of one thousand suns. We cannot even look at it. Be compassionate towards us, Gracious Lord. You are the only refuge for us all, Kesava. We prostrate ourselves before you, O supreme soul without beginning, Lord of Lords. You are as powerful as the Fire of Final destruction. Salutations to you".

Then the seven rishis, Brihaspathi, Vasus, and Mahendra and others sang the praise of the Lord thus : "Obeisance to you, soul of the Universe. You are Brahma, Ravi, Chandra, Aswanis, Marut, Lord of the Jagat. You hold the discus that shines like a thousand Suns. You handle the conch, O Vishnu, obeisance to you. Brahman, your body is as charming as a dark blue cloud. Your weapons and body are glittering. Lord of Yagnas, reverence to you, Padmanabha, destroyer of Kalanemi, Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasyapa.

O Narasimha, salutations to you always. We salute your universal body which holds all weapons. Neither we nor Brahma can know you". Sankara and other sages praised the Lord thus : "Hail to you, Lord, Hail to you, O, broad eyed Paramatm, Padmanabha, Omnipresent. By your illusion Gods also are deluded. Hail to you, Omniscient Parabrahman, Bestower of boons. You were never created. You can never be measured. You are the

Lord of Lakshmi. You are the liberator of your votaries, and saviour of Gods. You are Purushottama, We pay reverence to you always. There is no place where you do not exist. We pay obeisance to you. O wearer of crown and precious lustrous jewels. A look at your body absolves every one from sorrow and sin. We salute your form which was never seen by any one so far”.

Indra, and other rulers of the eight regions of the eight cardinal points of the Universe then hailed the Lord eulogising his powers and form. They concluded their prayer saying : “Salutations to you, the creator of terror among the Rakshasas- You are the bestower of happiness and heaven. You have no waxing or waning. You have no from, birth or change.”

Salutations to you, O Supreme Being. There is none equal to you. Lord of the Universe, have mercy on us. Bhagavan, You control the growth and decay of the Universe, Save us.” In their turn the inhabitants of Sveta Dveepa paid reverence to Vishnu thus :

“Almighty Vishnu, we salute you. You are the primeval and Supreme Being, whom gods also worship. You were not created by any one. You are the creator of the Universe. You rescued the earth by your fangs. You are the donor of prosperity to everyone. You are the omnipresent, Achyuta. We prostrate before you, O Saviour of the Universe. At the beginning of the creation you release the Universe. You consume it at its end. You are the unending power, whom the learned wise alone can see. You are the Supreme Godhead pervading the Universe. You are the spirit remaining like a child at the end of the creation. At the beginning of the creation, Brahma was born from your navel. You are the Supreme Being who rescues the

world from the clutches of the wicked. We salute you. You are the Supreme Spirit who has neither growth nor decay. Brahma even can not understand you. We salute you." Thus everybody paid reverence to Sri Narayana again and again and stood around him with folded hands. In the mean time celestial lovely ladies sang the praise of Sri Vishnu. Some described the legend of Sri Rama killing Ravana. Some others sang with special reference to Lord Krishna's achievements and episodes relating to other incarnations. Yet some recited songs about the beginning of the Universe. The Gandharavas also rendered fine music. Apsaras danced ravishingly. The music reached the four corners of the Universe. All were struck with wonder at the sight of Lord Narayana. They saw in his supreme body the entire Universe, mountains, rivers, all worlds, all creatures, animate and inanimate. With bewildered eyes, agitated minds and perplexed bodies they sat. Lord Vishnu looked at them with his auspicious, spotless, and gracious eyes. Immediately, every one felt composed and freed from fear. Looking at the sages and gods the Lord said :-

"Hear everyone. Any person who sees and prays to me shall get all his desires fulfilled on earth and achieve liberation in the end. Tell me your desires. You need not hesitate." The sages felt immensely happy and said :- "Lord, Govinda, we do not desire anything except your vision. We have been roaming about on this hill, Narayanachala in search of you. Kindly liberate us from this world and its desires. We seek refuge in your feet. Grant us liberation from this fearful world."

The Lord assured them of all they desired. "I shall fulfil all your desires. You will get salvation by my grace at the end of the Kalpa. Till then carry on your penance with determination. Listen to my stories. Sing my glories. Engage your-

selves in penance" he advised. In the mean time Brahma paid reverence to Sri Vishnu and said "Bhagavan, Achyuta, omniscient, kindly hear my submission. These Gods have been denied their due shares in Yagnas. The demons have ousted them and usurped their share. The Gods are unable to kill the demons. Please destroy the Rakshasas".

Bhagavan Vishnu smiled. "These Rakshasas have been troubling the Gods and Devatas. Vishwakshena, you annihilate the demon race" ordered he. Turning to Vasu he said "King of Chedi, you will achieve salvation very soon. There is no devotee of mine equal to you any where. Did I not save Prahlada?" Addressing Agastya who was shedding tears of joy, the Lord said "I am pleased with your devotion. Ask any boon. I am prepared to grant it, however difficult it may be". Agastya was extremely happy at the Lord's gesture.

His hairs stood at their ends. With folded hands he submitted: "Lord, Kesava, I could not see you so far in spite of my search for over a century on Narayanachala. I am highly excited as I see you now, today at last: Bless that I may have pure, supreme and concentrated devotion to you". Sree Vishnu said "As you desire, Agastya. I shall dwell on this hill." Agastya said "One condition, Lord, you should be visible to one and all". Sreehari assured the sage "I shall stay here with my consorts. My Vimana shall be a hidden one capable of granting final beattitude. It shall be a supreme one with precious gems. Any one who ascends it, bathes in the Swami Pushkarini and drinks of its holy waters, visits and worships me with devotion gets all his ambitions fulfilled. Any person who salutes the hill from even a distance of one hundred yojanas

shall be absolved of all his sins by my grace and shall reach my realm at his end. Those who worship the Pushkarini shall also get benefited materially and spiritually."

The sages then saw the Vimana dazzling like the sun, on southern bank of Swami Pushkarini. It was tastefully decorated with gems and jewels. All its towers were decorated. Never seen by any one till then, it was very tall and moving on the hill. The sages were astonished on seeing it. "What is this wonderful object which we never saw so far?" They questioned each other. "It must be the wonderful act of the Almighty. We are seeing this sacred Vimana on the banks of the holy Pushkarini" observed they.

Meanwhile Sree Vishnu asked king Sankha to disclose his desire. Sankha desired to reach the Almighty's abode and do severe penance. His wish was granted. All the Siddhas, sages, Yogis, the seven great rishis and natives of the white island and Brahma saluted the Almighty. After a while the Lord disappeared. Every one was depressed. All began to weep, one looking at another. "Lo! What a glorious light flashed out from the Lord! How it spread throughout the universe! The mighty weapons appeared as though they would reduce to ashes the entire universe and dry up all the oceans! What a great light! How wonderful are the hands of the Lord! His face is like the full moon. How lovely are his ears with gem studded jewels! How bright are his nails! They are like the moon land! How lives Sri hari! None can describe him".

"There is no place in the entire universe, save Venkateswara. There is no God, any where, save Venkateswara. There will be no God equal to him! There is no lake equal to Swami

Pushkarini. Cursed is he who says that there is any such. There is no sinner like him. The seven great cities, which are capable of conferring merit are nothing when compared to Venkatachala" so eulogising they felt extremely happy. The brahmins bathed in the Pushkarini and visited the Vimana. They paid obeisance to Achyuta. All prostrated themselves before Kesava, whose praise they sang. They got down the Vimana and prostrated before the Almighty time and again.

86. Sankara returnsto Kailasa

After some time Sankara wanted to return to Kailasa from Venkatachala. Vrishabha, his vehicle, was decorated tastefully. The huge bodied mighty bull looked like a big cloud. He was adorned with costly gem-set ornaments. His horns were touching the sky. A celestial rope, decked with gems was tied to him. His horns were also decorated exquisitely. Golden bells were hung around the bull's trunk. Seated on him and accompanied by his detachment Siva returned to Kailasa while his praise was sung. The Pramathas, who were his constant companions, appeared wonderful. Some had single hand only, while some had ten. Yet some had their heads located in their knees, while some had them in their thighs. Some had horse faces. Yet a few had donkey faces. Each one had however, a different shape. All creatures looked at Siva curiously and went near him. They prostrated before him with devotion. Carrying Siva, Vrishbha flew in the sky. The sages sang the praise of Sambhu thus: "We pay reverence to you, O three eyed Lord, holder of Trisula. We pay homage to you. You are a votary of Vishnu. You are dear to him. You are the destroyers of Rakshasas. You dwell in Kailasa. We pray to you, Lord of Lords, Neelakantha, Kapilaksha, Visalaksha, Lord with matted hair. You are the destroyer of everything. We seek refuge in you, Lord".

Thus, Sankara arrived at Kailasa, his sacred abode.

87. Agastya Stays on Venkatachala

Agastya and his companions continued to stay on Venkatachala, bathing in the holy waters of the Swami Pushkarini and meditating on Janardana. Twelve years elapsed. Meanwhile the sages chanted the sacred eight syllabled Mantra, which is recited by those desiring salvation from the cycle of births and deaths. Brahmma and Sankara perform the duties entrusted to them by virtue of the power they acquire by uttering this all powerful divine spell. The Ashtakshari Mantra redeems one from all his sins. It grants all desires of human beings. It relieves everyone of his woes.

On the expiry of twelve years, Agastya and his party went round the Vimana and prostrated themselves before Sree Hari. Meanwhile the Vimana again disappeared. All were astonished. "This Vimana vanished once. It has appeared again. How wonderful!" everyone thought. King Uparichara Vasu offered worship to Lord Vasudeva and recited the twelve syllabled mantra in the Vimana. The Siddhas and other natives of Sveta Dweepa, all holders of Conch and discus, chanted the same mantra staying in the Vimana for long. The seven sages, Devas, Sukra, Brihaspati and Yogis and Sanaka and others saluted Janardana. They sang the praise of the holy hill and returned to their respective abodes. The divine conch then went to Indra's region. Vishwakshena accompanied by his able ministers engaged himself in wiping out the rakshasas. "The Vimana will remain on the sacred hill being worshipped for ever. It will be seen by those who meditate on Sreehari and perform penance. Those who

mediatate will have the vision of the celestial Vimana by the grace of Sri Hari - in the Kali age also" announced Agastya. "Sri Vishnu will remain here with all his divinity, just as he was seen. He will stay here with his consorts. The Vimana will be famous and capable of setting at naught every one's sins" added Agastya.

All Gods, Siddhas, Gandharvas, Yakshas, Pannagas, Adityas, Rudras, Brahma and Sambhu offer worship to the Supreme Being, Narayana. By bathing in the Swami Pushkarini and offering worship to Sri Govinda in the Vimana and singing his praise always, all get redeemed of their sins. Those suffering from diseases will be cured by bathing in the Pushkarini. Similarly sorrows of the afflicted will be got rid of. Wherever one may live, if he turns towards the Vimana and salutes Venkatadri, he will be freed from his sins instantly. Everywhere on Narayanadri, Sri Narayana manifests himself. Everywhere on the hill he is present in one form or the other, as animal or a tree or a human being or a God. Who ever worships Him and propitiates him, reaches the supreme ultimately. Whoever resides on Vrishabhachala for a ghatika (24 minutes) even, will be rid instantaneously of the sins accrued by him in his past seven births. Whoever commits any sinful deed on the Anjana hill, out of ignorance even, will be killed by armed Gandharvas under the orders of Vishwakshena. Hence none should commit any sinful act on the hill. All animate and inanimate beings on the hill are forms of God, born to serve the Almighty. Any donation made on the hill results in the acquisition of immense merit by the donor. Free feeding near Swami Pushkarini is the best donation. One who feeds free those who reside near the Pushkarini shall be free from all diseases. One who donates land, cows, gold, clothes, maidens or even sesamum (Tila) seeds reaches

after his life, the best region, where he stays till the end of the Kalpa and attains devotion to Sri Hari and finally reaches Vishnuloka. Who ever distributes food in charity, without any hope of any reward or return on the banks of Swami Pushkarini achieves highest devotion to Sree hari and within a short time reaches the Supreme goal.

88. Lord Neela Kantha worsships:

Lord Nrisimha

About thirty yojanas north of Seshachala there is another hill, in a lovely locality, and covered by all sorts of beautiful trees, rivulets and water falls. There was the hermitage of Lord Siva on it. Around it are mines of precious stones. Angels also reside there, meditating on the Supreme. Yogis engaged in realisation of the Self live there, some in meditation and some in yoga. Wild animal reside there treating every other creature as friend. Near that sacred hermitage pure and crystal clear water flows in streams containing beautiful lotus flowers, fish, and water birds. Hermits and anchorites, some controlling their senses, and some reciting holy incantations addressed to Lord Narasimha, the all Bliss, knowledge and detachment are found there. The locality is holy. The sacred waters in the springs there are capable of fulfilling all the desires of those who touch them, or drink of them.

There was a huge stone banyan tree near the hermitage, looking as if it was a representative of the celestial wish yielding tree Kalpataru. It was very bright. It could destroy every sin. The Ashram of Lord Neelakhantha, Siva was located at the root of that tree. All varieties of flower bearing trees and creepers were there.

Once upon a time, Lord Neelakhantha went to offer worship to Srihari at that charming spot. He had a holy dip in the Pushkarini. Accompanied by his attendants he offered worship to Lakshmi Nrisimha, following the procedure laid down in the Pancharatra system of worship, for the welfare of all the worlds. Seated on a tiger skin on a lonely seat under the tree. Sankara assumed the lotus posture and meditated on Sree Hari in its proximity to Ahobila, the holy Vishnava Kshetra, the abode of Sree Narasimha, the hermitage of Neelakhantha, more famous.

89. Uparichara Vasu

Once upon a time the Rishas, Indra and Devatas had a doubt regarding some procedure in the performance of Yagna. They wanted to have their doubt cleared by Uparichara Vasu, who was an authority on the subject. They were on their way to meet him. Vasu himself happened to see them mean while. He received them with due honours, gave them seats and questioned them humbly the purpose of their journey. "King, we are coming to meet you. A doubt has arisen. We want you to clear it. You are the only competent person on the subject. With what should a Yagna be performed? Is it necessary to sacrifice an animal or is there a substitute for the sacrifice? Can any medicinal plant be used instead? You are an authority on the subject. Kindly enlighten us". they said, With folded hands Vasu asked them about their own theories. "There are two theories" they said. "we belong to the group, which supports the view that grain can be offered in sacrifices. The Devatas support the view that animal and bird sacrifice is necessary" they added. Vasu pondered over for a while. "Difference of opinion has cropped up between Maharshies and Devatas. But the Devatas deserve preference. Hence I support their view", he thought. He gave out his verdict that a goat has to be sacrificed in yagna and that no substitute would do. The rishis got wild on hearing Vasu's opinion. "If what you say is not the ultimate Dharma you will go Rasathala, the neither region. If what you say is the correct Supreme Dharma, then we will go there now itself" they announced.

“The Supreme Lord is Narayana. He is the knower of all” so saying Vasu fell down straight to Rasatala. Yet he was contemplating on the Supreme Being with concentration. Vayu the wind god carried him to Rasatala through a cave. Vasu continued to chant the twelve syllabled mantra and meditate on Vasudeva. Finally he entered Rasatala. The Dyteyas who were his previous enemies saw him. They collected in numbers and gave him a fight. They used all their strength and made use of all weapons available with them. Meanwhile directed by Sreehari, his discus rushed to save Vasu. The Devatas could not stand its onslaught. Several of them suffered humiliation. Others took to their heels. Vasu continued his supplications to Purushothama, who could know the fate of his devotee. Vasu was suffering on account of his fear of the Brahmins’ curse. Reclining on his serpent bed in the ocean of milk the Lord thought of Garuda. In a moment the vehicle arrived. “Look here, Garuda”, said Sreehari “Vasu, my devotee is suffering in Patala as the Brahmins’ curse is on him. Even there he thinks of me. Go and save him” ordered the Lord. Garuda rushed with great speed. All serpents, natives of Rasatala, Danavas hundreds in number collapsed. Mountains trembled. Oceans became rough. Trees were uprooted. Birds left the sky. Garuda went and saw Vasu, the Chedi King. The king was at his devotions. He stood up with folded hands on seeing Garuda. He saluted the celestial Eagle. Garuda reciprocated and said The Almighty has deputed me to bring you to Him. Please be seated on my back. I shall transport you “Vasu replied”. I shall come, but not on your back. Your back is the sacred seat of Govinda alone” Garuda then hugged Vasu and carried him with his hands. By the velocity of the wind blown by the

wings of Garuda the natives of Patala were frightened. The mighty serpents ran hither and thither, with fear. The Rakshasas fled thinking that Krishna was coming. Garuda took Vasu to his native land. Later on Vasu visited the holy Venkatachala and paid obeisance to Lord Sreenivasa. He returned to his kingdom, ruled over it as an ideal Rajarshi and enjoyed life by the grace of Vishnu. He attained salvation in the end.

90. King Sankha

Long ago there was a king, named Sruta, of Hyhaya dynasty. He was an ideal king and treated his subjects as his children. Sankha, his son, was well versed in all Sastras. He was a votary of Sreehari whom alone he worshipped. Like Prahlada he was a great devotee. After his father's death Sankha became the king. He continued to remember Govinda, sing his glory and listen to his stories. In order to propitiate Sree Hari, he offered worship to brahmins. In spite of all that he could not have a vision of Sreehari. He was sorry for his lot. The Lord, however, observed the grief of the king. One day he announced through a heavenly voice thus:- "O king, you will see me on Narayana-chala. Go there and do severe penance after bathing in the holy Pushkarini. After one thousand years, sage Agastya, accompanied by his disciples will come to the hill. He will be moving about in search of me to have my vision. Then you will see me and the sage. Be not despaired. I shall fulfil your desire. Proceed at once to Narayanadri." Sankha entreated the Lord:- "so long as the Sun, moon and earth remain, let me serve you, my Lord". He handed over his kingdom to his able son and repaired to Narayanagiri. Vasishtha, whom he approached previously, advised him to meet Agastya on Seshadri. "A stone, Brahma Sila, will be found at the confluence of rivers Suvarnamukhi and Kulya. Who ever bathes at that confluence, offers libations to the Devas and and Rishis according to scriptures and offers Pindas and libation to their deceased ancestors on the Brahmasila will be pleasing his ancestors upto seven generations. The offerings would have the same merit as if they were made at Gaya. Who ever donates

anything cow, gold, land, clothes etc will also earn great merit" said Vasishtha to Sankha.

One thousand years passed by. Valakhilya and many Siddhas arrived at the holy hill. They bathed in the Pushkarini and offered worship to Sreenivasa. Gandharvas and Apsaras did their job of singing and dancing. One day Agastya and some other sages also arrived on Venkatachala. All had holy dips in the several teerthas and worshiped the Supreme Being at many sacred spots. However, Agastya was not able to have the vision of the Supreme. He was so sorry, and roamed about for one hundred years. After sometime Brihaspati and Sukra also came to Sankha who was engaged in penance. Agastya saw Sankha. Both exchanged greetings and sang the glory of Govinda. Two days and night elapsed. On the third night Agastya and Sankha had dreams. Lord Narayana, the Supreme, appeared before them, in the dreams. The king and Agastya woke up and bathed in the Pushkarini. A bird led them to the spot where they worshipped Lord Janadarna. Both chanted the eight syllabled mantra addressed to Narayana. Then a wonderful light appeared in front of them. It was as if billions of sons, moons, and fires, all in one, sprang up. Everyone wondered. All beheld Lord Sreehari, with his kowsthubha jewel and his consort on his chest. They prostrated themselves before the Supreme Being. Hearing the dreadful sound of Srihari's conch, all celestial beings and sages rushed to this scene on their vehicles. Garuda and Vishvakshena also arrived in haste. There was a heavy downpour of flowers from heaven. Divine damsels danced. All prostrated before the Lord. Brahma and gods praised the Lord and expressed their inability to withstand the divine splendour and light any longer. Sri Hari was pleased with their prayer. He immediately assumed a quiet form and appeared with a tranquil face, on

his celestial vehicle. All gods were pleased at the intensity of Agastyas' penance. Sreehari then asked the sage to spell out his desire. Agastya felt that his life had been a success. "Madhava", he said "I had already achieved all my desires by your grace. I am lucky in the three worlds. All my desires were fulfilled already by you. Even then on account of my fickle mindedness, I venture to put forth before you my ambition. Lord, bless me that I might have devotion to your lotus feet, for ever. Along with me some others also have come to bathe in Suvarnamukhi and get purified. Let all those, who have holy dips in the sacred rivers, and who worship Lord Venkateswara, be blessed".

Sree Vishnu granted the request of Agastya. "This river Suvarnamukhi will be like the sacred Ganga. Here after, Agastya, I shall dwell as desired by you, on this hill which is equal to Vykuntha. Those who are cleansed of their sins in this river and worship me here shall be prosperous in every way. When they die they reach heaven and stay there till the end of the Kalpa. They will have no rebirth. They will finally reach the ever blissful feet of mine. The Lord went on describing the merits of those who pay obeisance to him. "Childless will beget many children. Those who desire wealth will have it. The sick will gain good health. Those in troubles will get rid of them. Desires, however impossible they may be, will be fulfilled: There is no doubt. Any one who remembers me always is blessed by me." added the Lord.

He then expressed his satisfaction at the presence of Sankha, whom he asked to spell out his desire. Sankha desired nothing except the status of a devotee. He asked the Lord to accept his service permanently. "Brahma and Yogis perceive me in my Archa (icon) form. Construct a Vimana for me the preser-

vation of my icon and worship the icon daily. The learned only can understand my real form as distinguished from my icon. Some time afterwards you will reach me" said Vishnu and disappeared. Sankha died after some time and reached the Lord's realm.

Venkatadri is so sacred and Sri Venkatesa so great a God that both have no equals anywhere. Moksha is easy for any one who, soon after getting up from bed every morning, remembers Sree Venkateswara. At the instance of Brahma the Lord left his Varaha body and assumed the splendid, enchanting and wonderful shape then.

At the request of Agastya and Sankha he appeared to them in the most pleasing and lovely form. To those who have a holy dip in Swami pushkarini and pay reverence to the Lord of Varahachala, salvation is within easy reach. They attain merit which accrues by performing one thousand horse sacrifices and hundreds of great Vajapeyas.

91. Qualities of a Devotee of Vishnu

Dharani, mother of Padmavathi, once requested her daughter to enlighten her about the qualities of a devotee of Srihari. Padmavathi narrated them thus: "A votary of Sri Vishnu gets the marks of conch and discus painted on both his hands daily. He wears Urdhva Pundra and twelve Pundras (sectarian marks) on his forehead, chest, (both sides) stomach, both hands and back. He paints Kesava and other names on the above twelve parts of his body and the words :

"Vasudeva Namosthu" (Obeisance to Vasudeva), on his head.

A Vyshnava

- 1) studies Vedas;
- 2) performs all rituals as prescribed by karmas;
- 3) speaks the truth ;
- 4) does not hate any one
- 5) does not blame any one
- 6) does not steal any others' property
- 7) never thinks of seeing or touching any other's wife
- 8) is kind to every creature
- 9) does good to others always
- 10) sings the Lord's praise and the Lord's votary's praise ;
- 11) is satisfied with what he has
- 12) is devoted to his spouse ;

- 13) is devoid of attachment, anger and fear.
- 14) follows the scriptures
- 15) recites the names of divine incantations of Chakra and other weapons of the Lord
- 16) worships Fire god
- 17) recites the mantra 'Jataveda' and Moola mantras one hundred and eight times and recites Sooktha.
- 18) gets the various marks of the weapons of Vishnu, and permanently on the various parts of his body as ordained.

"A Vyshnava who follows the above is a true Vyshnava. He attains the supreme state. I like such a votary only" said dmavathi.

"Vishnu is my mother. None else. I remember Vishnu always. I speak of Sri Hari always. In him alone I live. I always desire such a union with the Supreme" "says a devotee of Sri Hari" she concluded.

92. Sage Suka

SUKA, Son of Vyasa received instructions in the supreme and sacred spiritual knowledge from kudra and became a Jnani while he was yet a boy. After perfecting himself, he conceived the entire Universe as Brahman, the Supreme Being. Mad with the knowledge, he wandered in the world. At the age of fifteen he shone with lustre like Lord Krishna.

“Goddess Kamala is my mother. Lord Janardana is my father. Votaries of Vishnu are my relations. The three worlds are my native place” so saying Suka once left his father proceeded towards the Sun.

Finding his son nearing the Sun, Vyasa wept and shouted “O my son, O my son”. The Sun saw Suka and said affectionately “My dear boy, you have no sons Go back to the earth, head hanging downwards. Beget sons, get yourself redeemed of your debt and obligations to your parents and come here. One without sons cannot have salvation. Even if one performs Yagnas and does penance, a man with no sons is doomed. He can never reach heaven”.

Listening to the Sun's advice Suka contemplated on Lord Janardana. He created another Suka resembling himself head hanging downwards, and said :

“You are my son. Redeem my father from his distress” and proceeded.

The new Suka then approached Vyasa who was lamenting for his son and learnt Bhagavata. He married and had sons. By the grace of Lord Krishna, he became a Rishi.

93. Sage Suka Visits Sree Venkatachala

Once Brahma was seated in his throne which was elegantly decorated with most precious gems. By his side were Savitri and Saraswati. Gandharvas were singing melodiously, and Kinnaras were playing on their Veenas before him. Indra and other top rankin gods were also present. Sages Vasishtha and several celestial beings and hermits were discussing about the greatness of sacred countries. Incidentally a topic came up for discussion. It was about the glory of Narayanachala and manifestations of Srinivasa on it. Suka, who was also present in the assembly felt a keen desire to visit the holy hill. He paid homage to Brahma, obtained his permission and went to Narayanadri. He saw the hermitage of Narayana there. Venkatachala was a fine place to visit and stay. It was full of natural beauty. Suka bathed in all the holly lakes and water falls on the hill and remained immersed in meditation on the Almighty. Sleeping on hard rocks and controlling his senses he spent his time. Then he visited Anjanadri. There he was accorded a hearty welcome by sages, the learned and siddhas. He had holy dips in Kumaradhara and Papanasana teerthas and spent three days near the latter one. Some time ago Indra, bathed in this teertha and was freed from the sin he acquired by killing a brahmin and retained the kingdom. Suka then proceeded to Akasaganga and bathed in its waters. In the pure waters of this teertha, celestial women, Naga Maidens and Gandharvas bathe. Suka, later on marched to Vratatee vartanee teertha. Reciting prayers to Bhagavan Vishnu, he was having a dip in it. Then he

heard a heavenly voice thus: "In about half a yojana, south east of Seshadri, there is another hill. At its base there are many rivulets, the waters of which are capable of eradication of all sins. Near the banks of Suvarnamukhi, you will see Padmasarovara. Go there and do severe penance. After some time Vishnu will appear before you" Suka followed the heavenly advice and went to the lake. It was full of pure waters, charming flowers, lovely birds, and fanciful fish. The sage had a dip in the lake and felt refreshed. He prayed to Narayana. Near the lake he found a splendid garden with fascinating trees of every species including Rudraksha and Tulasi. Suka undertook penance there. Nearby, Vedas were being recited. Fragrance of smoke emanating from fire worshipped by sages in the vicinity was captivating. Suka meditated on Lord Vishnu. He lived on restricted diet. His speech was reserved and his conduct was rigid. He maintained equanimity of mind, peace and tranquility. He became an ardent votary of Vishnu. Without worshipping Lord Srinivasa he would not eat anything. Without offering anything to the Lord he would not eat at all. Even when thirsty he would drink nothing except water offered to the feet of Vishnu. He never minded the climates. He had no illwill towards any. He sat on kusa grass. He wore deer skin. His intellect was sharp. Concentrating his eyes on the tip of his nose, he sat erect in yogic posture. An expert in breath control, he was well versed in Dharana and Dhyana also. Engaged in mental Japa, sealing his lips, he had his mind always with Lord Vishnu. He chanted Gayatri and Vyshnava Mantras. Seated in waters during rains and amidst the five fires in summer, he never cared the seasons. He never slept even. On account of the severity of his penance the earth trembled. The Sun could not shine. The seas dried up. Clouds did not rain water. Fire could not do his job. Indra did not know what to do. "I shall disturb Suka's penance", he thought, at last.

He sent for Apsaras and said "Look here, you young girls, Brahma created you for a specific purpose. You can subdue my enemies by your glances. Having you in their front, who can meditate on God? You are always my strength in times of danger. A total catastrophe has fallen on the earth now. You have to act instantly" Rambha, the chief of the Apsaras, saluted Indra, and said "Give us your command, Lord of Suras, We are here to carry it out- We are all experts in the art of erotics. We are prepared to do anything. Is there any one who is not fascinated by our looks? One who looks at us falls at our feet surely". Indra complimented her. "On the banks of River Suvarnamukhi on the earth, a sage called Suka is doing severe penance. You lovely lady, proceed there and entice him" instructed her. Rambha and her accomplices greeted Indra and left on their job. They reached the hermitage of Suka and began to sing and dance. Some played on their veenas and some on their flutes. They exhibited all their skill by every gesture known to them. As ordered by Indra already the day was cool. Vayu fanned fragrant and fine winds slowly. The moon was there to help the activities of the damsels. Nature helped them in every way. Spring showered scented flowers. Every thing was favourable to Cupid. But the adventures of the Apsaras were of no avail before Suka, who continued his meditation. The Apsara ladies felt ashamed. Anger aided their shame. "Who is this fool that ignores us? He does not notice a damsel before him! Even Indra will be highly pleased on looking at our faces. What for do men perform Yagnas after all? Is it not to enjoy us? is it easy for a man to get our embrace? Did not wise people say that one should learn in boyhood, enjoy worldly things in youth, and do penance in old age? A tender youth sits in religious austerities, while loveliest

of the lovely ladies stand before him! One who indulges in careers not suited to his age or place leads a useless life so say the learned. Alas! here is a stupid who discards a diamond in his hands and tries to seek a stone from some where. We, celestial ladies, deserve respect from men!" Thus the pretty ladies engaged themselves in prattling. Suka did not even look at them. He felt as if some asses were brawling. "Who ever thought of disturbing my penance and sent these elements here? Why have these creatures come down here? Who has thought of picking up a quarrel with me unnecessarily? These women! Shame! Knowledge, courage and many such qualities disappear when a man looks at a woman. Even brave and learned men are fascinated at the sight of a woman. Really, a woman is the gate way to Hell. A sage acquires sin by looking at a woman. Brahma created males and females and the world goes on! Penance is the only way by which human beings can cross the ocean of Samsara. Even though I am in a forest my penance is disturbed by fate!, I must avoid these women!" thought the sage. He hit back the cupid's arrows and sought refuge in Lord Sreenivasa. He did not however curse the Apsaras lest the power of his penance might be wasted. The sage then invoked Vishnu thus: "When, long ago, Madhu and Kaitabha, the demons, stole the Vedas from Brahma, You assumed the shape of a fish, recovered the Vedas and gave them to Brahma. Lord, I seek refuge in You.

When Mount Mandara had to be held in the ocean in order to churn the waters and extract nectar for the benefit of Devatas, you became a tortoise and enabled the churning by holding the mountain on your back. Lord, I seek refuge in you.

When, unable to bear the atrocities of the demon, the earth sank to the bottom of the ocean, you dived deep into the waters assuming the body of a boar and rescued the earth. Lord, you are my shelter.

When a young devotee of yours was put to test and was tortured in every way by his father, Hiranya Kasyapa, the demon king, you became a man lion, sprang up from a pillar in the assembly hall of the king and tore him to pieces. Lord, I seek your protection.

When Bali, the demon king became arrogant and troubled the Devatas, you became Vamana, a dwarf brahmin bachelor boy, went to the sacrifice conducted by the king, begged of him three square feet of land, occupied the universe with your two feet and showed the king his proper place. I seek shelter in you.

You incarnated as Bhargavarama, the brahmin warrior, attacked the Kshatriyas twenty one times and almost erased that race and killed your own mother, obeying your father's command and later on gave her a place in heaven. Lord, you are my shelter. When the ten headed Ravana was a menace to the world, you incarnated as Rama and killed Ravana with a single arrow and granted Lanka, his country conquered by you to Vibhishana, brother of Ravana. Lord, I seek your refuge.

Lord, you were born as Balarama, the leader of Yadavas and with your weapon a plough, killed Pralamba and other demons. I seek your protection.

Lord, you were born in the Vrishna family. You relieved the earth from the weight of the demons, took sides with the righteous Pandavas. Yogis pay obeisance to you. You are my refuge.

To destroy the wicked, you will be incarnating as Kalki. Lord, I seek your refuge.

Purusha was born from you, O Supreme soul. I am born of the five elements and Tanmatras. Lord, you are omnipresent. You are the creator of, preserver, and destroyer of every thing. At the end of the creation you will preserve in your belly all the animate and inanimate beings and sleep on a banyan leaf in the waters, the only remnant after everything created perishes. I seek refuge in you.

You are the commander of the ship containing the seven oceans. You shine brilliantly amidst the golden light with seven rays. O Light, you are my refuge.

You are sinless, pure and finality of all the Vedas, everlasting, the ultimate Moksha. You are my refuge. You are the one without a second, the treasure of all treasures, the Supreme Self, the Bliss. In you I seek refuge.

Bhagavan, save me. In this body of mine consisting of skin, bones, flesh, urine, phlegm and other excreta, I do not have any desire. Extend your gracious looks towards me.

Lord, devotion to your feet is the only devotion worth the name. Intellect is that by which the uncontrollable senses are kept under control. Can human beings who worship your feet have anything inauspicious? Lord of the universe, I am afraid my penance is disturbed by the erotic looks of these women.

Come to my rescue. Save me, my Lord. There is none other than you, Mukunda, for me to seek refuge. My meditation is disturbed. You are the protector of those without protection. You live always in my intellect and speech. What is there that your devotees can not achieve with your grace? If you forsake

me my sensual desires awaken. Save me from these women. I am afraid of them. Reverence to you, O Compassionate Lord, bestower of all prosperity, Lakshmi Narayana, reverence to you”.

Thus after Suka prayed to the Lord, the damsels were disappointed. They returned with broken hearts. The sage felt relieved. He resumed penance. He remembered Lord Hrisheekesa, kept all his senses under his control, and lost himself in ecstasy, concentrating on Sreehari. An embodiment of Vygnaua, Vyragya, Suka continued his severe tapas. Sreehari was pleased. Beautifully decorated, seated on an altar accompanied by Vishwakshena and followed by great sages, Indra and millions of minor gods, and holding all his weapons, he descended before Suka with all his powers, and three consorts.

Suka got up excited. He forgot himself. His hairs stood at their ends. He was immersed in joy. He offered a deer skin to the Lord and worshipped him. His eyes streamed with tears of bliss. His voice became suffocated. His joy knew no bounds. He began to dance. He went round the Lord clock wise and anti-clock wise, not knowing what he was doing. He paid reverence again and again to the Almighty. He fell down like a stick some time. He prostrated before the Lord's feet, some other time. Such was Suka's devotion. At last, the Lord was pleased with his devotee. Looking at Suka he said “O best of the sages, I am pleased with your penance, You will go to heaven in the flesh. At the end of the Kalpa you will merge with my divine body.” Vishnu then disappeared. Suka was happy as he achieved his desire. He continued to stay at a solitary place free from any disturbance and did penance. He grew lotus flowers in the lake. He meditated on the Supreme Following Samkhya Yoga he chanted the twelve syllabled Vasudeva Mantra.

After some time, Suka founded a village for brahmins. It was named Sukapuri. 108 brahmins were provided with houses there. They were ardent devotees of Vishhnu and adepts in Vedas and Sastraf. In that village Suka consecrated the idols of Sree Krishna and Balabhadra. "Dwell here, my Lord, as you do in Vykuntha" he prayed to the Lord.

One day when Suka had a dip in the holy Pushkarini and sat near the hill in meditation Lord Siva appeared before him. On Siva's head were dazzling crescent moon and Ganga. Suka wore a tiger skin. He prostrated before Krittivasa and sang his praise. After three days, Suka went to Anjanachala, where he saw several holy sages, Siddhas and Vidyadharas engaged in meditation. Later on, he returned to Swami Pushakarini, touched its waters and sipped some of them. He contemplated on the Almighty Sri Hari and Lakshmi. He was immersed in Yoga again. After some time Vishnu manifested himself before Suka, holding all his weapons and accompanied by his consorts.

On his forehead, he had a brilliant mark which enhanced his beauty. His ear-rings looked like golden lotus flowers and lovely lilies. His eyes were wide. They were like lotus petals. His nose was like gingely flower. His lips resembled the fruits of garkins. His face was like the full moon in winter. His neck looked like a conch. His shoulders appeared like those of a bull. He wore the Kausthubha, the luminent and Sreevatsa, the brilliant, on his broad chest. He held the usual weapons and lotus in his four hands. His navel was deep and lovely. His belt was set with gems. He had a sword inserted in it. Every limb of his body was exquisitely charming. Suka beheld the Lord and prostrated himself before Him, and prayed thus: "Salutations to you, O Omnipresent, Supreme Lord, creator, Preserver and destroyer, hail to you, Srinivasa. Narayana, Ocean of compassion, have mercy on me". He prostrated before the Lord, time and again along with other sages and disciples. He then returned to Mount Meru, recapitulating the various forms of the Almighty

94. The Secret Chapter

The Bhavishyottara Purana contains a chapter on the secrets of the greatness and glory of Sri Venkatachala and Lord Venkateswara. Sootha narrated these secrets to sages Saunaka and others, thus : "I had learnt the secrets from Vyasa. These give the quintessence of all the eighteen Puranas. They grant you highest bliss and a place in Vykuntha. These secrets are the epitomy of all Vedanta and relieve every one from the bondage of Samsara. This chapter is an elixir for all ills. In the Kali-yuga it is saviour of the impure humanity. In the entire Universe, the holiest and most sacred kshetra is Anandanilaya on Venkatachala. It is a cure all for every disease and sin. It is the ultimate goal of every one. Every one should prostrate himself before Sri Venkatachalapathi. Sacred Venkatachala is the sole refuge on earth for one and all. The only Supreme Being, the end of all, the cure for all and the final goal is Sri Venkateswara. There is no God other than him.

See Venkateswara There is none else you need see.

Visit Venkateswara There is no other teertha you
need visit.

Worship Venkateswara There is no other knowledge to be gained.

Meditate on Venka- There is no other meditation you
teswara need resort to.

Go to Venkatachala There is no other place you need go.

Pay obeisance to Sri Venkateswara	There is no Vishnu other than him
Pay reverence to Venkateswara	There is no Brahma other than him
Salute ari Venkateswara	There is no God greater than him.
Visit Venkateswara	There is no one else to be visited other than him.
Know Venkateswara	There is no other yoga you need practise
Pray to Sri Venkateswara	There is no other eternal being than Sri Venkateswara.

There is no supreme being other than him.

Pay homage to Sri Venkatachala

There is no abode supreme, other than Sri Venkatachala.

There is no Sastra which excels Vedantha- No God higher than Sri Venkateswara. There is no refuge for any one other than Sri Venkateswara. There is none blissful than Sri Venkateswara. There is no Sath-Chith Ananda form except Sri Venkateswara's. Salvation is assured after visiting him. There is no Almighty or Supreme Being except him. This is the truth, the only truth. There is no God equal to Sri Venkateswara in the entire Universe. This is the dictum of Vedanta.

When on a former occasion, Goddess Parvathi requested Mahadeva to enlighten her about the efficacy of the holiest kshetra, he revealed the glory of Venkatachala and the merit achieved by bathing in the sacred teethas, particularly in Swami Pushkarini, and the several donations and meditation made on Sri Venkatachala. The sacred Mantra of Sri Venka-

teswara is, "Om Namah Sri Venkatesaya". the eight syllabled Manthra (excluding OM), Sootha then suggested to his listeners to visit Sri Venkatachala, have a dip in the Swami Pushkarini, pay obeisance to Lord Bhuvaraha, proceed to the shrine of Sri Venkateswara, circumambulate it, visit Sri Venkateswaraa, offer worship and pay reverence to him, offer Naivedya, sing his praise, prostrate before Him, and pay homage to the kshetrapala also, following the procedure laid down in the scriptures. You will then attain Moksha" concluded Sootha. The listeners obeyed him. Then Sootha went to Varanasi, obtained the permission of his guru Vyasa, and rushed to Sri Venkatachala.

"Reverential greetings to you, hail to you, blessed Lord with beautiful and marvellous body, munificent donor of desired objects, Sreemath Venkata Nadha, Sreenivasa. All prosperity to you."

Gifts to those who are after others wives and others' money are useless. An ungrateful, jealous, idiot, even though a brahmin, is not fit to be a donee. Similarly an aesthet, one who indulges in unnecessary arguments, a barren woman or a prostitute should never be saluted.

When in a Yāgnasala or assembly or shrine exchange of special greetings between persons is prohibited. In particular a wise brahmin should never salute any one whose wife is cruel or childless. Feeding the hungry poor, and performance of *pitrush-raddha*, the annual or other ceremony of the deceased fathers etc., on Venkatachala are considered propitious. Those who donate gold to the worthy, on the sacred hill to please Lord Madhusudhana attain Moksha. The souls of the deceased fathers or fore-fathers of every one desire that Shradha ceremonies should be performed on the prescribed days in their memories on the sacred Venkatachala. Such ceremonies lead the deceased to salvation. Donation of cows also confers merits on the donors. Donation of lands for the worship of Gods, and the various services also confers instant liberation, whether the donation is made intentionally or not.

One who donates villages for the worship of all the deities attains supreme state. One who gets a chariot prepared for the deities gets immense merit. Similarly one who presents an umbrella or a fan to Sri Venkateswara. One who donates any thing pleasing, is rewarded by the Lord. The result will also depend on the worth of the recipient. When Lord Saridhara himself is the recipient of any donation the merit will be immeasurable. What ever is donated to a religious minded brahmin; however

small the gift may be, the merit grows like a banyan tree. One who worships the Lord, hoisting his flag or presenting a bell, gets divine knowledge. One who celebrates the festival of Vishnu attains Indra's office. One who offers worship to Lord Venkateswara by chanting the one thousand names of the Lord will have every desire of his fulfilled. Every gift made to the Lord has its own merit.

96. Offering lamps on Sree Venkatachala. The story of Vishnu Vridhdha

Vishnu Vridhdha, a wicked man murdered his guru and made the guru's wife as his personal servant. He had immoral life also with her. After some time he became a leper. The guru's wife also suffered misery. Vridhdha's house was burnt. He felt ashamed. All the relatives of Vishnu Vridhdha deserted him. Consequently he went into a wilderness, where he died a miserable death. Finally he reached Hell. His son, Vedanana once went to Venkatachala. Remembering the sins which his father committed, he offered lamps to Sri Venkateswara. As a result, his father was redeemed of all his sins and went to Vishnu Loka. A light offered to Sri Venkateswara ensures happiness to the offerer. Any gift made on the sacred hill enables the donor achieve immense merit. One who listens to one sloka even of the Glory of Sri Venkatachala acquires the merit of a horse sacrifice (Ashwamedha).

One who listens to even a word of the glory of the holy hill gets redeemed of his worst sins. One in whose house a copy of the book "Sri Venkatachala-its glory" is available, achieves longevity, health and wealth. In the end he goes to the domain of Vishnu.

97. Procedure to be followed in Pilgrimages

After getting educated well in boyhood, and after the convocation, one should undertake pilgrimage to holy places. He should perform rituals also. Rituals are of three kinds.

1) Nityam, 2) Nimittikam, and 3) Kaamyam.

The first are to be done daily. The second category relates to occasional ones. They are periodical also. The last class relates to optional ones, performed for some specific objects and with a view to future fruition. Pilgrimage falls under the second category. A pundit who has control over his mind may not undertake pilgrimages. If a person goes on pilgrimage in the company of holy persons, listening to sacred stories, he attains Brahmaloka. Pilgrimage should be undertaken according to the procedure prescribed in scriptures. One who does his duties without any thoughts of the reward will be rewarded. By the study of shastras one acquires faith. By faith he achieves devotion. By devotion, Lord Almighty Kesava is pleased. By pilgrimage reciting shastras, one can know the Almighty. Gods and Rishis also go on pilgrimages and get purified. Pilgrimages should be made with devotion and attention. By such, one gets relieved of his sins and attains the highest state. With devotion one should offer his wealth or other property to Sri Venkateswara. Without devotion and devoutness nothing is assured. Pilgrimage to Venkatachala should be undertaken with earnestness.

98. Maharshis Visit Sri Venkatachala

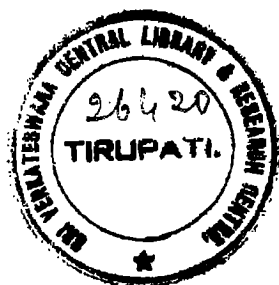
After narrating the story and glory of Sri Venkateswara, Sootha advised his listeners to visit the sacred hill, and do homage to Sri Venkateswara. "All of you visit the hill. Bathe in the sacred waters of the teerthas there. Circumambulate the hill. Climb it. Bathe in the Swami Pushkarini, following the rituals. Go round the Vimana, by seeing which all your sins will be liquidated, and you will be happy. Visit the shrine of Lord Bhuvараहा. Pay reverence to Lord Venkateswara. Sing his praise. Recite his names. Worship him with lotus flowers. You will get your desires fulfilled" instructed, Sootha. All the sages, Bharadwaja, Kausika, Jabali, Pulahastha, Pulasthya, Gouthama, Angeerasa, Devala, Kanva, Mrikanda and many others proceeded on pilgrimage shouting loudly "Govinda, Govinda", time and again. They crossed the Rivers Gouthami and Krishna-veni, after having holy dips in them. They reached Venkatachala, which was covered by lovely trees, sacred teerthas and inhabited by beautiful birds. They followed the instructions of Sootha scrupulously and began to pay obeisance to Sri Venkateswara. On their way they saw lofty hills, with gems. Some sages sang in ecstasy. Some danced in rapture. Some chanted Samaveda. All prayed. Every one was excited with joy. They fell, and got up. Slowly they went round the hill. They bathed in the Kapila teertha and saluted Siva. Then they ascended the holy hill. They saw the sacred Vimana. They bathed in the Swami Pushkarini and paid reverence to Lord Lakshmipathi. The Lord was shining with

the lustre of ten million Cupids. He held the brilliant diadem on his head. He had Lakshmi in his chest. He held the conch and the discus in two of his hands, and was dazzling like a blue cloud, wearing yellow silk clothes. He had his two spouses on either of his side. The sages beheld the Lord, prostrated themselves before him, recited Mantras from Vedas. Worshipping with flowers they sang his praise thus :-

“Lord, from your mouth are born the Vipras. From your shoulders the Kshatriyas, from your thighs the Vaisyas and from your feet the sudras are born. From your face was born the Fire. From your mind the moon, the manas and from your eyes the Sun were born. O Supreme Being, we salute you. Just as it is impossible to count the number of particles in the earth, it is not possible to assess your abilities. O Almighty, Vishnu, You were in the past, you are in the present, and you will be in the future, safe guarding virtue. We prostrate ourselves before you. Your feet are the universe and the heaven. From you were born the Vedas, Rick, Sama, and Mind. Salutations to you, Lord of Lakshmi, Lord Vishnu.”

Lord Venkateswara was pleased with the prayer. He assured the sages that their wishes would be fulfilled. “Whereever one may be, if he listens to the glory of Venkatadri or sings or reads it with attention during the month of Kanya, in particular, he will have easy access to me. I grant all prosperity, children and grand-children to such votary. At the end of his earthly life he will reach my abode” he declared. The Maharshis stayed on Venkatachala for five years., They had holy dips in all the sacred teerthas on Venkatadri, paid reverence to the Lord and returned to Nymisa forest. They extolled Sootha for his masterly exposition of the glory of Sri Venkatachala and its Lord.

"O Sootha, how wonderful and charming is the Lord!" they exclaimed. "By your grace we are all blessed." they added. Sootha replied, "By the grace of Vyasa, all this was revealed. It is really impossible for even one thousand Seshas to describe for thousands of years the glory of Sri Venkatachala. Even so, it is enough if a minor part of it is narrated. One would achieve merit and longevity, if he reads or listens to, or writes the glory of Sri Venkatachala. He would attain all prosperity and achieve all his desires." concluded Sootha.



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